

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Surah Al-Maidah, 5:16-17

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ
تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ
اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ ۖ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ
سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَ
يَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝

[5:16] O People of the Book! there has come to you Our Messenger who unfolds to you much of what you had kept hidden of the Book and passes over much. There has come to you indeed from Allah a Light and a clear Book.

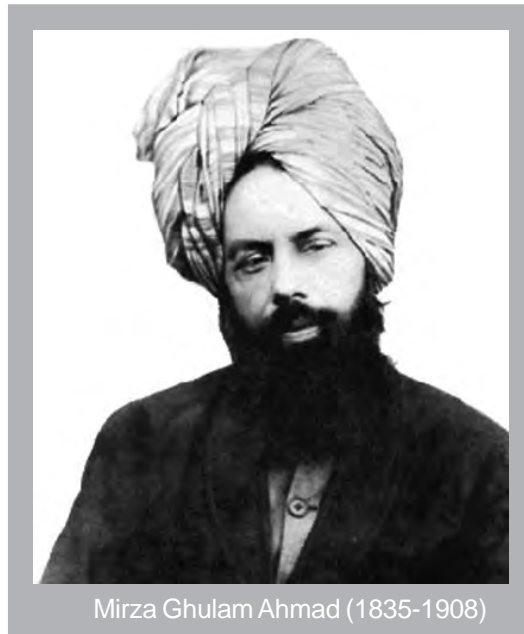
[5:17] Thereby does Allah guide those who seek His pleasure on the paths of peace, and leads them out of every kind of darkness into light by His will, and guides them to the right path.

In the Words of the Promised Messiah

God, in whose meeting is man's salvation and eternal happiness, cannot be found without following the Holy Qur'an. Would that people could see that which I have seen and they could hear that which I have heard and give up following stories and run towards reality.

The means of obtaining perfect knowledge through which one can see God, and the cleansing water which removes all doubts, and the mirror through which one can behold that High Being, is the converse with God which I have just mentioned. He whose soul seeks the truth should arise and search for it. I say truly that if souls were inspired by true search and hearts felt true thirst, people would look for this way and would search for it. I assure the seekers that Islam alone gives the good news of this way for other people have since long sealed up the possibility of revelation.

Be sure that this seal is not set by God, but as man has deprived himself of this favor, he seeks excuses for its absence. As it is not possible that we should be able to see without eyes or should be able to hear without ears or should be able to speak without a tongue, in the same way, it is not possible that we should be able to behold the countenance of the Beloved without the Holy Qur'an. I was young and am now old, but I have found no one who might have drunk of this clear understanding without this holy fountain



[Islami Usul ki Philosophy, Now printed in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 10, pp. 128-129].

The straight path and the principal means which is full of the lights of certainty, and is the perfect guide for our spiritual welfare and our intellectual progress, is the Holy Qur'an which is charged with the settlement of all the religious contests of the world. It contains a large quantity of the water of life for us and comprises many rare and priceless jewels which are hidden in it and are being displayed every day. It is an excellent touchstone whereby we can distinguish between truth and falsehood. It is the one bright lamp which shows the way of truth. Without doubt the hearts of those who have a relationship with the straight path are drawn to the Holy Qur'an. God has so fashioned their hearts that they lean towards their Beloved like a lover and find no rest elsewhere, and hearing a plain and clear di-

rective from Him, they listen to nothing else. They accept joyfully and eagerly every verity contained in it. In the end it becomes the means of illumination of the heart and lighting up the conscience and of wonderful disclosures. It leads everyone to the heights of progress according to their capacities. The righteous have always been in need of walking in the light of the Holy Qur'an. Whenever Islam has been confronted with any other religion in consequence of some new condition of the age, the sharp and effective instrument that has immediately come to hand is the Holy

Qur'an. In the same way, whenever philosophic thought has been given publicity in opposition to it, the Holy Qur'an has destroyed that poisonous plant and has so humiliated it as to provide a mirror to its students which shows up that true philosophy which is contained in the Holy Qur'an. In the modern age, when Christian missionaries started their propaganda and made an attempt to draw away unintelligent and ignorant people from the Unity of God and to make them worship a humble creature and employed every kind of sophistry for dressing up their doubtful ideas and thus created a storm in India, it was the Holy Qur'an which repelled them so that they are not now able to face an intelligent person and their extensive apologetics have been folded up like a piece of paper.

[Izalah Auham, (Amritsar, Riyaz Hind Press 1308 A.H.); Now published in Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 3, pp. 524-525].

A Message of Peace

By Shahina Bashir

The son of Prophet Adam^{as}, Cain decided to kill his brother, Abel because God had accepted the offering of the latter and not the former. But Abel did not retaliate against his brother. Instead he said to him, "If thou stretch out thy hand against me to kill me, I am not going to stretch out my hand against thee. I do fear Allah, the Lord of the Universe."

(Holy Qur'an, 5:29)

Abel did not mean that he should not even defend himself but what he meant was that if he were forced to stretch his hand towards his brother it would be for the purpose of self defense and not in order to slay him. Thus, Abel reacted towards his hostile brother with peace rather than aggression.

Throughout the ages men continued to be aggressive against each other. In the pre-historic time, he was not able to distinguish between right and wrong and acted on his instincts. He was territorial and lived only by the basic needs- to feed and clothe himself. But God, the Creator, did not plan to leave the best of His creations faltering in darkness. It was His plan that righteous servants would be chosen and sent to guide their own people. These servants of God taught men to live in harmony with each other

and to prefer peace at all times except when they are under attack by the enemies. The best of such among the servants of God was none other than the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. He brought the charter of peace to mankind 14 centuries ago. Who can be a better proponent of peace than the one who endured the extreme form of injustice meted out to him and his companions simply for the fact that they claimed that there was no god but God? If he resisted his enemies it was only in self defense and to protect the houses of worship, for God Himself gave him permission to fight those who had wronged them and transgressed against them.

After the glorious time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} and the period of the four *Rightly Guided Caliphs*, and the various dynasties and caliphates, the Muslims came to face a time of tribulation. There were vehement oppositions from the Christians, Jews, and Hindus. Vile accusations were made against the holy personage of the founder of Islam, Muhammad^{saw}. But the Muslim clerics did not know how to defend the honor of the beloved servant of God. It was during this dark time that God raised another prophet in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} in a little known place in India, in the province of Punjab. The place was Qadian and the man who was raised to bring back the honor of the founder of Islam was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. He was the Promised Messiah and the Reformer of the latter days. God had sent him to restore peace through the true message of Islam. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} wrote, "Through the proclamation of truth I should bring about peace by putting an end to religious wars and should manifest the verities which have become hidden from the

eyes of the world." (Lecture Lahore, p.47) Even before he made his claim of being the Messiah and the Mahdi, Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} wrote many articles refuting the attacks of Christians and Aryas (a Hindu sect) against Islam. He was a man given to solitude and although he became popular because of his writings, he rarely came in public. He realized that peace was jeopardized because of the religious differences. But he was determined to end hostilities not through sheer force but through reason.

Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} wrote about 80 books during his lifetime and spent endless hours dialoguing with members of various faiths. He was no doubt rejected by his own fellow Muslims as he claimed to have fulfilled the second coming of Hadhrat Jesus^{as} and that he was also the Mahdi and a prophet. He had a daunting task of not only defending the honor of Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad but he also had to defend his own status as a messenger of God. A day before he passed away (May 25, 1908) he put together a lecture titled *A Message of Peace*. This address was read out on his behalf at a conference held on June 21, 1908 at the Punjab University, Lahore. It was an appeal to the followers of the major religions to come together and propagate peace and harmony rather than hatred and discord. His belief was that peace can only be brought about if the followers of each religion recognize the authenticity of the others' faiths. That is, a Christian should not think that his religion is the only true faith established by God, neither should a Jew think likewise. He argued that it would be against the Wisdom of the Almighty that He should favor only one group of people while He should leave the others groping in the dark trying to understand their purpose on this earth. He wrote, "Pure common sense cannot accept the proposition that God, the Lord of the Universe, Who illuminates the East and West alike with His

Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} held a stance against any kind of violence. He believed deeply in the Quranic injunction that there is no compulsion in religion. He refuted the claims of many Orientalists that Islam was spread by the sword.

radiant sun and quenches the thirst of every land with the universal bounty of His rain, should be so miserly (God forbid!) with regards to the spiritual needs of man as to become partial only to one country, one people and one language.” (pp. 36-37) So in other words, Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} clearly stated that no religion should hold a monopoly over the other faiths.

Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} held a stance against any kind of violence. He believed deeply in the Quranic injunction that there is no compulsion in religion. He refuted the claims of many Orientalists that Islam was spread by the sword. He not only believed each and every word of the Qur'an, but he was a devoted follower of Prophet Muhammad. He knew that it would be beyond simple logic that the Prophet of Islam should go directly against the commandment of his Lord and wield swords over the heads of the disbelievers and give them a choice of death or life through the acceptance of Islam. He declared that one of the signs of the truth of the Promised Messiah is that he would not wage religious wars. His statement is corroborated by the *Hadith* recorded in Sahih Bukhari according to which the Holy Prophet^{saw} had said that when the Messiah descends he will bring an end to religious wars. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} said that the reason is that the opponents of Islam would also have stopped religious wars. Instead he made the point that those who want to attack Islam do so with the pen. He gave the



example of the Christians who publish materials and they make every effort to give Islam a bad name and distance it from the people. He said, “In these circumstances, should we have recourse to the pen or the arrow? Who will be a greater enemy of Islam and a bigger idiot than the one who opts for the latter? What else would it mean except to defame Islam? Our opponents are not in the right and yet they do not resort to the use of the sword, how sad and unfortunate it would be if we, being in the right, should think of taking up the sword.” (Lecture Ludhiana, pp. 36-37)

Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} made it clear to his followers that they should display compassion towards their fellow humans no matter what race, color, or creed they may belong to. He instructed the members of his community to spread peace on earth so that their own faith will spread in return. In his book, “The British Government and Jihad,” Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} clarifies that what the Muslims call *jihad* by attacking the people of other religions is not the *jihad* of Divine religious Law (*Shari'ah*), rather it is a grave sin and a transgression against the commandments of God and His Prophet.

It is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the mission of Hadhrat Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, was to bring about peace and harmony between people of diverse backgrounds as a single creation of the Almighty God. This peace can be achieved through utmost compassion towards all human beings. Just as God showers His grace upon all of mankind - good and wicked alike - so should be the attitude of God's best creation. The 4th Condition of Initiation as laid out by Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} says, “That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means”.

It is a simple statement but profound. If a Muslim or any other follows this condition to the letter, there can be nothing but peace on this earth. ♦

Editorial

The unfortunate incident at Fort Hood, TX brought the name of Islam to the news headlines again. A misguided, misinformed and ignorant person shot and killed innocent people, destroying the lives of many. What made it even more heinous was the fact that the person committing this act had sworn to protect the lives of the United States citizens. The very people whose lives he was to protect became his victims. What prompted him to perform this cruel and unjustified act remains to be seen.

There are commentators who try to bring out Islam and its holy book, the Quran, as the cause whenever this sort of incident takes place. Over the last 1400 years, billions of human beings across the globe have followed the teachings of the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. It has guided

them to live a life of peace, tranquility and spiritually rewarding.

We must not and should not judge a faith by a few misguided people who claim to be the followers of a certain faith. We must not judge Christianity, for example, based on what took place in Ireland among the Catholics and Protestants. We must not judge Christianity by the actions of the Serbs in Yugoslavia in the recent times of Muslim cleansing of their country. We should judge Christianity by its overall teachings of mercy, humility and the example of its founder, Jesus son of Mary and his disciples.

In the same manner, Islam and its book should not be judged by the actions or misinterpretation of the misguided few. We have provided in this issue of the Muslim Sunrise some debate on

the teachings of mercifulness in the Holy Quran and addressed briefly the topics of suicide bombings and related issues. Specifically, we have highlighted the message of peace from the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to all faiths and nations.

As part of the backlash against Islam some writers compile books bashing Islam and its holy book. One such book is “The Secrets of The Koran” by Don Richardson. In the next issue (Spring 2010) of Muslim Sunrise, Inshallah, we will address every issue brought up by the writer in reference to the teachings of the Holy Quran. It is essential in order to give the appropriate information about the teachings of Islam to the general public. It is important so irresponsible reactions do not take place to the unfortunate and irresponsible acts of a few misguided people such as at Fort Hood, TX.

God is our Wali (Friend)

Manifestation of God being Wali (Friend) of the pious and devout followers of Prophets of God

Summary of Friday Sermon Delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (at), the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (respectfully and affectionately known as "Huzur.") The sermon was delivered November 27 th, 2009.

Huzur gave a discourse on the manifestation of God being Wali of the pious and devout followers of Prophets of God in his Friday Sermon today.

Huzur said that in his past few sermons he has been giving discourse on the subject of Al Wali in light of Quranic verses, explaining how God manifests being a Friend and Maula (Protector) and how indeed should a person try and become God's friend. The highest status of a friend of God was of course granted to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

'We are your friends in this life and the Hereafter. Therein you will have all that your souls will desire, and therein you will have all that you will ask for – .' (41:32) Huzur said the foremost recipient of this statement is the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), God's greatest beloved, the one for whom the world was created and for whom God manifested as Al Wali from his birth to his passing away. God thus assured him: '...And Allah will protect thee from men...' (5:68) and protected him from all harm. During his migration to Medina while he hid in a cave with Hadhrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) he thus assured his companion, '...Grieve not, for Allah is with us...' (9:40).

Due to the power of the holiness of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) the manifestation of God being a Wali of believers could be seen among his followers. When God sent the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) he too witnessed many instances of God being his Wali.

Hadhrat Zubair's son Abdullah bin Zubair relates that his father told him at the time of a battle that his life would be taken during the event. He advised his son to pay off his debts by selling his property and also gave specific other instructions. He told his son that if at any time he would face problem in paying off



'We are your friends in this life and the Hereafter. Therein you will have all that your souls will desire, and therein you will have all that you will ask for – .' (41:32) Huzur said the foremost recipient of this statement is the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), God's greatest beloved, the one for whom the world was created and for whom God manifested as Al Wali from his birth to his passing away. God thus assured him: '...And Allah will protect thee from men...' (5:68)

the debt, he should seek help of his Maula (Protector). Abdullah bin Zubair asked who was his Maula? The father replied, Allah. It is related that whenever the son faced any difficulty in paying off the debt, he would pray 'O Maula of Zubair, pay off his debt' and the situation would be resolved.

Once some Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) were deceptively asked by people of a tribe to provide them with religious training, but instead martyred them. One of the martyrs

was Ahsan bin Thabit. After taking the life of Ahsan the enemy tried to get hold of his head because a woman of the enemy had vowed to drink alcohol in his skull because he had killed her two sons at the Battle of Uhud. However, a swarm of bees came in between the enemy and where Ahsan's body lay. The enemy decided to return at night to take his body. Heavy rain fell during night and there was flooding which swept Ahsan's body away. After accepting Islam Ahsan had pledged that he would never touch an idolater and also would

not allow an idolater to touch him. When Hadhrat Umer (may Allah be pleased with him) was informed of this incident, he said 'God protects believers'. Thus God protected Ahsan even after death.

Once, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) sent some of his Companions on an expedition with just one bag of dates for food. During the expedition the Companions would just eat one date daily and would suck on it as they had nothing else to eat. They would soak tree leaves and eat them. They found a huge fish by the sea, as it was carrion they decided not to eat it. They then thought that they had been sent by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), and were in a vulnerable state so they would eat it. The fish was so big that it lasted them a month. They also utilised its oil. God had made this arrangement for them. After their return they told the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and he said they had done the correct thing. Huzur said thus was God's way of helping the Companions. God states to those who have perfect belief in Him, abide by His taqwa and put their trust in Him, 'And will provide for him from where he expects not...' (65:4). Huzur said God fulfils His promises to the believers in this world and strengthens their faith that he will indeed fulfil the promises made in the Hereafter as well.

In fulfilment of His promise of 'And among others from among them who have not yet joined them...' (62:4) God sent the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and blessed his followers with manifestations of Him being their Wali.

Dr. Idr Deen Sahib heard from someone that if one wished to become a friend of God (wali'ullah) one should go to Qadian. Dr. Idr Deen sahib wrote a letter of bai'at to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). Maulana Rajiki sahib relates that he would often talk with his friend Chaudhary Nawab Khan about the spiritual glories of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). They once discussed that when Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din was asked that he was already quite an exceptional person what had he gained from the bai'at of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace)? The reply was that there were many gains but one was that while previously he could have the blessed sighting of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) in his sleep, after bai'at he could also experience it while awake. He said one tremendous benefit of the company of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) was that the love of the

world had completely cooled off from the heart of Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din.

Chaudhary Allah Daad sahib once someone asked Maulana Rajiki whether it was true that certain prayers bring about monetary help? He replied that yes a specific instant of particular spirituality can make this possible. He said if he experienced such an instant he would tell Chaudhary Allah Daad sahib of a specific prayer. Maulana Rajiki experienced such a moment and wrote down the prayer that came to him and gave it to Chaudhary Allah Daad sahib advising him to always keep it on his person, who promptly put it in the folds of his turban. God accepted the prayer in a way that he benefited from it for an entire year. Somehow, he then lost the prayer and the sequence of the blessing came to an end.

Hakeem Muhammad Ismail sahib relates that during the circumcision of his son mistakenly a blood vessel was cut and the baby became extremely ill. Panicking he rushed to get some medicine. Maulwi Sher Ali sahib happened to pass by. Hakeem Muhammad Ismail sahib told him the incident and asked for prayers who promptly raised his hands to pray. When the father returned home he suggested that the child be given milk. The child took milk like a healthy baby.

Muhammad Hussain Jhelumi sahib relates that when a child-less non-Ahmadi woman who had been married for many years heard that Maulwi Sher Ali sahib was visiting he asked if he could get her an amulet. Muhammad Hussain Jhelumi sahib said there would be no amulet but Maulwi sahib could definitely be asked for prayers. A year after the prayers were made the woman was blessed with a son.

Maulana Rajiki related that due to Tabligh work he had been granted a spiritual condition that his prayers gained acceptance immediately. Once, Chaudhary Allah Daad sahib, who had not yet accepted Ahmadiyyat and suffered from chronic asthma spoke of his helplessness over the disease. He said he had tried every possible cure but the doctors had deemed his condition incurable. Maulana Rajiki told him that despair and belief could not go together. He asked for some water and seeking inspiration from the Divine quality of Al Shafi (the Healer) he prayed on the water with deep concentration. Chaudhary Allah Daad sahib was perfectly cured and did not ever suffer with asthma again.

Huzur related another incident of the acceptance of the prayers of Maulana Rajiki where non-Ahmadi people from a nearby vil-

lage had heard of his acceptance of prayer and came to him to pray for their family member who was suffering from tuberculosis. Maulana Rajiki's father told him to go to the village and pray. Immediately after Maulana Rajiki offered Salat the patient felt better. Although these people had good faith in Ahmadiyyat they did not accept it. God informed Maulana Rajiki that the person had been granted healing as a proof of the truthfulness of Ahmadiyyat, however, if they did not accept it the person would die on a specific date. God so willed that the patient got better but the disease attacked him again and on exactly the date foretold, he passed away. Astonishingly his family still did not accept Ahmadiyyat.

Once a man came to Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din and gave him Rupee 200 to keep as his trust for a while. Soon after another man came and asked Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din for a loan of Rupee 100. He gave the man the money from the amount given to him earlier and put the receipt in the bag which contained the rest of the money and sent the bag home. Shortly, the man who had left the money returned and said he had changed his mind, he wanted the money back. He said he would return in an hour to get it. When he returned Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din said to him it is wrong to rely on people, I did wrong but God look how my Maula helps. By the time the man returned Hadhrat Maulana Nur-ud-din had got Rupee 100 from somewhere which he returned to the man.

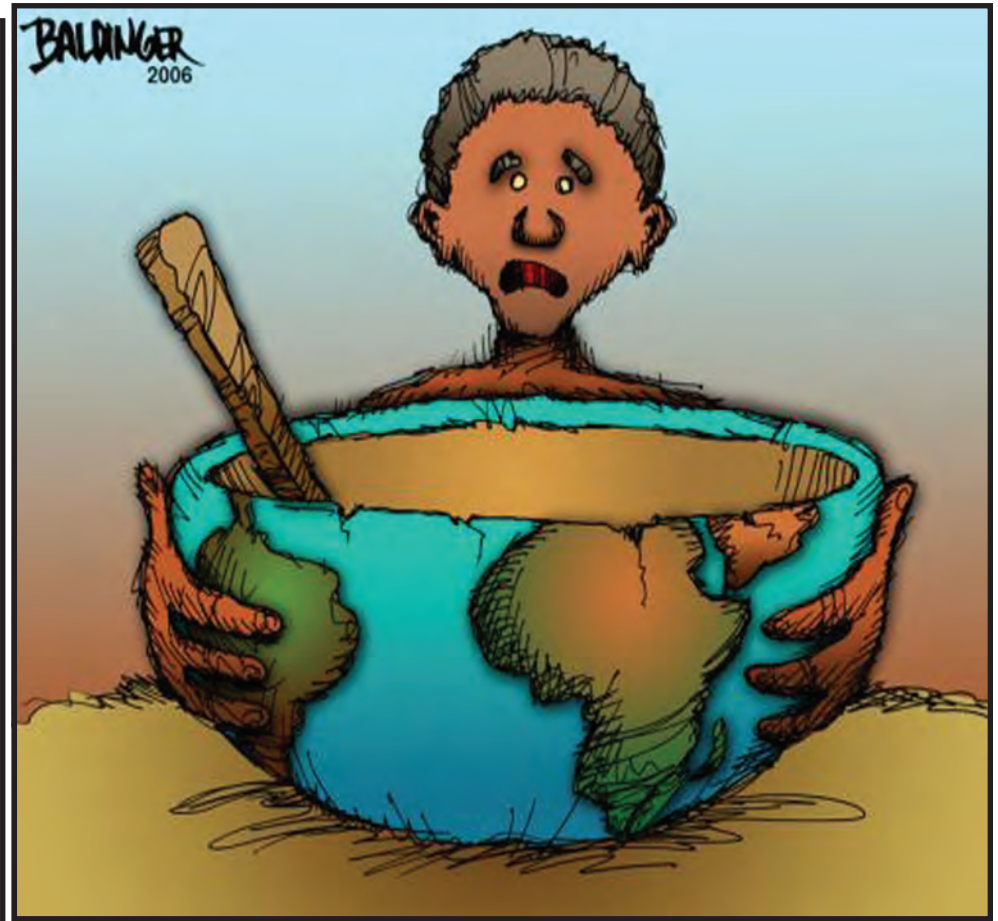
The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that God declares that whoever bears animosity with His wali is tantamount to preparing war against God. He said that friends of God have the tenor of children of God. When a person opposes them God's sense of honour is aroused. Friends of God are people who negate their self in God's way and who forsake all personal desires and only follow what is God's will. When one opposes a believer such as this how could he be called a believer. Hurting one commissioned by God can never bear good fruit. Huzur said God has always manifested a sense of honour for the Promised Messiah and continues to do so but those who do not wish to understand this, will not. God's connection with the Promised Messiah, with the Community prevails to this day. God demonstrates to those who turn to Him in complete sincerity that anyone can partake of nearness of God and become His wali. One who sincerely looks for God is never deprived. ♦

The Islamic Solution to World Hunger

By Shazia Sohail

While there are many factors that contribute to poverty in the Third World the major ones are easy to spot. Firstly, wealth is concentrated, mostly in the form of land, in a few hands. Therefore efforts to increase agricultural production primarily benefit the already wealthy. Secondly, under-developed countries prefer to export their agricultural products since their own citizens cannot afford to buy them. This is why we generally find that the countries where people are dying of hunger are net exporters of food. And thirdly, the Third World landowners are moving away from producing food to commodities like coffee, tea, cotton, lumber, and food for livestock, that are in demand in developed countries. They are stripping their own land of its natural resources to provide cheap raw materials to the First World.

One cannot look towards developed nations to solve these problems since they are incapable of asking their own citizens to lower their standard of living by paying higher prices for commodities; anyone who tries doing that would not get re-elected. So the Third World countries will have to solve their problems on their own. The solution would therefore comprise, first and foremost, the recognition of



food as a basic human right: one that takes supremacy over all other economic and trade-related concerns. Secondly, a mechanism for voluntary and equitable re-distribution of wealth needs to be devised so everyone can afford to buy the food that even now is abundantly available in the Third World nations. Thirdly, international trade has to be managed so the poor nations can protect the economic and agricultural interests of their own populations. And finally, a comprehensive economic blueprint needs to be devised for the uplift of the Third World populace.

Recognition of Food as a Human Right

The Third World countries have for years been trying to get mandatory language added on the Right to Food issue in the declarations of the World Food Summit and have always been defeated in their efforts by the developed nations due to the supremacy of Free Trade, a market concept that benefits the wealthy. One, therefore, has to look towards religion to find validation for this most natural law. Fortunately, Islam does offer a solution. The Holy Qur'an has unequivocally declared food as a human right in the words "*It is de-*

creed for thee that thou shalt not hunger therein nor shalt thou be naked. And that thou shalt not thirst therein, nor shalt thou be exposed to the sun (20:119-120)."

Equitable Distribution of Wealth

While land reform and taxation are repeatedly suggested as solutions, no remedy is offered to induce the rich and the powerful to formulate laws to their own apparent detriment. Once again Islam provides the answer. The Islamic economic system is such that it brings about a wide distribution of wealth through admonitions, to be carried out voluntarily, pertaining to taxation, law of inheritance, loans, and commercial practices, along with moral exhortation. *Zakat* is a levy, imposed upon the rich, which is spent on the welfare of the poorer sections of society. Inheritance, in Islam, must be divided in specified proportion, among prescribed heirs. Each heir can only take his or her share and no heir can be deprived of the whole or part of his or her share. This distribution of inheritance is emblematic of the preference for more people having some portion of wealth to some having a large share. Islam prohibits collecting interest on loans. Great moral excellence is

attributed to advancing interest-free loans. If the debtor is unable to comply at the time of repayment, it is suggested that he be granted an extension until his circumstances improve, or *if you remit it altogether as charity, that shall be better for you, if only you knew (2:281)*. It would help the poor countries greatly if aid from developed nations could be diverted to debt relief so they could break free of their prior commitments and focus on making appropriate changes for their future.

Protecting the Interests of Under-Developed Nations in International Trade

In the spirit of *Cooperate with one another in good works (5:3)*, the Third World nations need to assist each other in attaining self-sufficiency so they can rid themselves of the harmful effects of foreign aid. However, it is imperative that they resolve their regional disputes first. This will also reduce their expenditure on defense and the savings could be diverted to economic growth. The rich Muslim countries should help the poor Third World countries, irrespective of their religion, remove the scourge of starvation; they could pay the required 2.5% *Zakat* towards this end. This would break down barriers between Muslim and non-Muslim countries and open further avenues for mutual cooperation.

A Comprehensive Economic Blueprint

The Holy Qur'an suggests the following principles to be observed for a healthy economy:

"O ye who believe! Spend of the good things that you have earned, and of what We produce for you from the earth; and seek not what is bad to spend out of it when you would not take it yourselves except that you connive at it (2:268)."

Landowners are being admonished that it is Allah Who causes the earth to produce, and they should give a good, or sizeable, portion of it to the hardworking farmers, as their rightful share, as opposed to pittance or alms – something they would themselves be averse to accepting without compromising their dignity.

"Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty (2:269)." God is

guaranteeing here that refraining from foul economic practices will not make anyone poor. On the contrary, production will increase manifold when the farmers are highly motivated.

"If you give alms openly, it is well and good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you (2:272)." The second component to economic uplift of a society is abundance of voluntary almsgiving. Giving secretly is more likely to preserve the dignity of the recipient, a most critical element in people's emotional and moral well being.

"And whatever of wealth you spend, it is for yourselves, while you spend not but to seek the favor of Allah. And whatever of wealth you spend, it shall be paid back to you in full and you shall not be wronged (2:273)." The voluntary nature of spending for the good of society is reiterated. The promise here that their wealth will not diminish is the most amazing feature of this economic blueprint.

"These alms are for the poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. The ignorant man thinks them to be free from want because of their abstaining from begging. Thou shalt know them by their appearance; they do not beg of men with importunity (2:274)." Alms are only for those who, for some reason, are confined to a place where they cannot earn a living, like caregivers, teachers, or missionaries, in harsh environments; or the sick, disabled, or issueless elderly. It can be extrapolated from this that healthcare, disability benefits, and social security for the elderly could be paid by the state out of the charity collected from its citizens. Admonition against begging is to be found here as well; honorable mention is made of those who do not beg. Thus, asking others for aid lowers one's moral standing.

"Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve (2:275)." Such moral exhortations not only foster the will to comply with the minimum legal requirements of dissemination of resources but also to bring about one's own spiritual and moral growth through generous and equitable spending practices based on the premise that it is God Alone Who is Self-Sufficient and the Source of all prosperity; it is men who are in need, and can achieve prosperity, not through miserliness and holding back, but through beneficent spending in the service of His creatures.

"Those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is because they say:

'Trade also is like interest;' whereas Allah has made trade lawful and made interest unlawful (2:276)."

"Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase (2:277)." These words encompass a prophecy that the world will one day come to realize the harm inherent in interest based economics and the benefits of giving charity voluntarily.

"Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, shall have their reward from their Lord, and no fear shall come on them, nor shall they grieve (2:278)." *Zakat* is a 2.5% tax set aside for social welfare, and is payable on uninvested capital. It is one of the five pillars of Islam and is distinct from optional almsgiving in terms of obligation. This verse, however, draws attention to the fact that all the modes of worship go hand in hand and the urge to pay the *Zakat* is enhanced by strong faith, doing of good deeds, and prayer. A society comprising of such individuals would never face hunger.

Conclusion

Aid or sporadic donations do not address the underlying causes of extreme and debilitating poverty inflicting large populations in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa; it is attacking the symptoms of poverty only and not the root cause. Just as the problem is caused by greed and injustice at many different levels the solution will also encompass a comprehensive, albeit simple, set of principles to be adhered to by people at all levels of society in the Third World. Although aid can play some part in relieving hunger in the short term, complete and permanent eradication can only be brought about by a moral awakening of the elite in those countries. One has to look towards religion to provide that incentive and Islam provides the most comprehensive plan in this regard. ♦

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Personal Background

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Sins Against Life

The Qur'an confirms the Judeo-Christian sanctions against killing of an innocent person, and states that whosoever unjustly kills a single person, it shall be as if he has slaughtered all mankind; and whosoever saves a life, it shall be as if he had protected the life of all mankind (5:32).

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“Thou shalt not kill!”. This is a fundamental commandment among the Divine laws of all the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Bible repeatedly reinforces the moral precept that sanctity of life cannot be desecrated. The Qur'an confirms the Judeo-Christian sanctions against killing of an innocent person, and states that whosoever unjustly kills a single person, it shall be as if he has slaughtered all mankind; and whosoever saves a life, it shall be as if he had protected the life of all mankind (5:32). In Hinduism and Sikhism, the same rules apply: to commit murder is a *munmukh* – one of the most grievous sins. According to the teachings of the Jains and the Buddhists, life is sacrosanct, not to be taken away from any, even animals and insects.



God's Wrath and Death as Punishment

However, according to some religious scriptures, an unhappy God (or goddess) does not hesitate to inflict death as a punishment upon the rebellious. In Hinduism, the ferocious goddess Kali is depicted trampling upon her vanquished victims. The Bible and the Qur'an set examples of the past generations that were destroyed by God Almighty because of their sinfulness. The entire earth was engulfed in a devastating flood with the only exception of Noah^{as}, his family and some animals that could be saved on his ark. Moses^{as} brought nine dreadful plagues upon the Egyptians, as God's judgment on them, for they would not allow the Israelites to search for their Promised Land. The pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea. The tribes of 'Ad and Thamud, and the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah are only a few examples of complete annihilation incurred by God's wrath.

Human Sacrifice

In the remote past, however, humans were killed by religious authorities to please the gods, or to repay their debts. For example, the legends about the Aztec rituals describe, that their gods sacrificed themselves to provide sustenance to the universe, and thus by self-immolation, they helped mankind to survive and enjoy the pleasures of life. The stars, the moon, the earth and the crops were all sustained because gods were sacrificing their own flesh and blood continuously for the sake of human nourishment. Thus, it was believed that humans owed to gods a debt-payment called *nextlahualli*; and, therefore, expensive items such as grain, gold and animals were offered to gods. But no oblation could be higher in value than human blood. Offering human blood was a ritual to appease an angry god, or to give special thanks to an obliging deity. Ritual killings were practiced in North Africa, Mesopotamia, Europe, Japan, China and the Americas. In ancient Egypt, at the death of a pharaoh, some of

his servants were buried with him so that they may continue to serve him in the next world. As a personal penitence, the Aztecs offered their blood to gods by inflicting cuts on their earlobes, lips, tongue, chest or calves. The Maya kings would pierce even their own genitals, to safeguard their dynastic rule. Other motives for such an offering were to avert a threatening famine or epidemic, to achieve victory against an insidious enemy, or to avert the death of a popular leader. The methods used for human sacrifice were manifold. To count a few: hanging, strangling, drowning, burning, stabbing, throat cutting, shooting with arrows, and plucking the heart out of body. The sacrificial victim could be a man or a woman, a slave or a free man, a priest, or even a new born child. In Hinduism, among some Brahman and royal castes such as the Rajputs, the burning of a widow in the funeral pyre of her husband was deemed a meritorious act. This human sacrificial rite, known as *suttee*, can be traced back to the fourth century BC. Religious justification for this abhorrent act is not clear. Indications are that most probably it was not a voluntary self-sacrifice on the part of the Hindu widowed woman; there could be an element of greed on the part of the family of the deceased as the prevalent inheritance law made her the sole beneficiary. It is also possible that the widow preferred to die with her husband to avoid living an insufferable life with the family of her deceased husband. Whatever the cause might be, historically the practice of *suttee* continued among Indian Hindus for a very long time. Many Hindu thinkers and religious leaders spoke out passionately against this inhuman tradition. The Sikh Gurus emphatically forbade their followers to perform the *suttee*, encouraging the widows to remarry. Islam also considers the *suttee* as a grievous sin. Therefore, some of the Muslim Mughal kings of India, tried to abolish this custom. It was finally under the British Raj, that the then Governor-General Lord William Bentinck, finally abolished the *suttee*, declaring it illegal in India in 1829. In the Middle East, to avert extreme hardships, the Carthaginians practiced child sacrifice at the temple of Tophet, as an offering to their chief god Baal Hammon and his consort, the chief goddess Tanit. Usually it was the first born child to be sacrificed on a moonlit night. The body would roll down from the arms of the god into the fire pit. Loud

music would be played to subdue the wails of the tormented parents. The famous story of Abraham's^{as} readiness to sacrifice his own son is preserved in the Bible and the Qur'an, but at the end, he was forbidden to make the sacrifice, God asking him to kill an animal instead. It is believed that, among other reasons, one of the reasons why God stopped Abraham^{as} from sacrificing his son, was to end the heinous ritual of child killing prevalent in ancient cultures. Today, none of the present day religions allow the gruesome practice of child sacrifice.

Killing the Faithful

Over the course of history, innumerable men and women have been killed due to their unwillingness to change their religious beliefs. Individuals, families and minority groups have been murdered by their religious opponents; and furious battles waged only on the basis of religious differences. Many times a staunch believer would choose to die rather than to agree to convert under compulsion. Making the ultimate sacrifice for a higher and nobler cause, offering one's own life willingly, especially for one's faith, has always won tremendous respect from their co-religionists. Almost all religious traditions hold martyrdom to be an act of courage, and as such an esteemed virtue. Sincere love for beliefs, gives strength to a devotee to remain unwavering, even at the cost of one's life, property and honor. A martyr is called a 'witness', (*martys* in Greek, *shaheed* in Arabic), because he or she renders a testimony with his or her own blood for the truth. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims have had countless martyrs, men and women who laid down their lives for their faith: The Jews for worshipping One God alone, the Christians for their faith in Christ, and the Muslims for making the confession of faith (*shahada*), 'There is none to be worshipped but Allah, and Muhammad^{saw} is His messenger'. For the followers of these three religions, there is a common belief, that their patriarch Abraham^{as} was severely persecuted by the pagans, and was thrown in a lime kiln to be burnt to death, but was miraculously saved by God. The Jews take pride in their relentless spirit of martyrdom. For the Children of Abraham^{as}, life is a gift of God, not to be denied. But in Jewish history, there have been times when mass suicide was committed under extreme circum-

stances. Almost a thousand Zealot Jews killed themselves in the first century C.E. to save themselves from falling in the hands of Roman troops at the fort of Masada near the Dead Sea. The shocking decision was made under the fear that captured men would be sold off as slaves and women would be compelled to become prostitutes. Similarly, towards the end of twelfth century C.E., many Jews killed themselves in York Castle in northern England instead of being killed by the frenzied Christian mob of citizens of York. The Christian history starts with the events related to the crucifixion of Jesus^{as} and martyrdom, of Peter and Paul. Many companions of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} were killed by the non-believers. However, it would be incorrect to assume that death was inflicted upon the believers by the pagans alone. The Jews have killed Christians and Muslims; the Christians have slaughtered the Jews and the Muslims; and the Muslims have waged wars against the Jews and the Christians. Moreover, the Catholics and the Protestants, and the Sunnis and the Shiites have also bitterly persecuted each others. Similarly, the Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh and Sikh-Muslim violent conflicts are not uncommon. Sikh Gurus were killed by the Muslim Mughal kings.

Self-immolation

Usually a person is honored as a martyr, when killed by some oppressive religious antagonist. But there are occasions when self-immolation brings the distinctive honor of martyrdom to the faithful. To kill oneself in protest against a repressive force is deemed as a demonstration of commendable bravery. For Buddhists, for example, destruction of life, including one's own, is prohibited, yet honor suicide is practiced at times. Some Buddhist monks have burned themselves to death to protest the Buddhists' persecution by tyrannical regimes. To protest against the mistreatment of the Buddhists by the communists in China, a Buddhist monk killed himself in 1948, by sitting in a lotus position on a mixture of sawdust and soybean oil and setting it on flames. Another such incident was the well-publicized self-immolation of Monk Thich Quang Duc. In 1963 he committed suicide to protest against the policies of South

Vietnam's Diem administration, by dousing himself with gasoline and setting himself afire at a busy Saigon road intersection. The Jains do not believe in such dramatic acts of suicide, but fasting to death is not disallowed because it is not considered as a rash or impulsive practice. It is inviting death slowly with full determination. Starving unto death is condoned religiously only by the Terapantha, a branch of Jainism in India. One of its spiritual leaders and scholar named Jinendra Varni, in his early eighties, took a vow of terminal fast by opting for a slow but painless death by gradually reducing his food intake. He started his fast on April 12, 1983, and on May 24th he passed away in peace, without any pangs of death. However, some politicians, including Mahatma Gandhi who was a Hindu by faith, practiced fasting as a tool of non-violent protests against the injustice by the British, against the lower caste of Untouchables. In 1932, while imprisoned by the British, he entered in his famous "fast unto death," which proved an effective measure to achieve political gains, because the fear was that his death would cause a bloody revolution in India.

Suicidal Killings by the Faithful

Towards the end of World War II, out of sheer frustration and fear of defeat, the Japanese kamikaze pilots started deliberate suicidal attacks by crashing their fighter airplanes directly into the Allied ships. This tactic was used to stop or slow down the Allied advance towards Japan. The suicidal pilots flew their aircrafts laden with bombs, explosives and full fuel tanks. Every hit was a loss of one life, but it played havoc in the enemy ranks. Hundreds of crewmembers were killed and injured, along with expensive warships that were sunk or crippled by the attacks, and the kamikazes became instant heroes. One Japanese air-force captain, Masafumi Arima, is credited with inventing the suicidal attack when his fighter plane hit the aircraft carrier *USS Franklin*, on October 15, 1944. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Admiral by the Japanese High Command. Another kamikaze was young Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa who hit *USS Banker Hill* on May 11, 1945, killing 372 crewmen. It

is estimated that the kamikazes sank more than 40 Allied ships, killing approximately 5,000 sailors. The willingness for self-sacrifice is deeply rooted in the spirit of patriotism and the desire for martyrdom. However, when these patriotic and religious aspirations get blended with a burning passion of personal vengeance, in someone who has lost a close friend, relative, or co-religionist, then such a person can easily be manipulated against the real or perceived enemy to hurt others, including civilians. This tragic mix of emotions, coupled with a promise for honor in this world, and a spiritual reward in the next life, is behind the rapid growth in the heinous acts of suicide bombers. This extreme form of self-sacrifice seems to be the last resort for those, who become desperate by failure in achieving what they perceive, to be a just cause. For instance, the Hindu Tamil minority in Sri Lanka aspired to have their own separate homeland, and rebelled against the majority ethnic group of Buddhist Sinhalese. In 1983 they began the fight for their independence. After years of desperate attempts to gain freedom, the Hindu Tamil rebels started suicidal bombings, many times conducted by women. It is comparatively easy for a woman to hide the explosives by strapping them around her abdomen, pretending to be pregnant with a child. It is also possible that some women wanted to redeem themselves from the consequences of a sin committed in the past. In 1991, when it was feared that India was ready to invade Sri Lanka, a Tamil Hindu woman by the name of Dhanu, killed the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and many others by blowing herself up in a public meeting. A day prior to committing suicide, Dhanu and her co-conspirators had prayed at a temple for the success of their plan to kill Rajiv Gandhi; as her sacrifice was to serve the cause of her people, she must be fully convinced that gods were on her side, and after her death her worth would increase. Another Tamil woman killed nine persons by blowing herself up in a bomb explosion on February 7, 1998. Next year, again a woman blasted four men by detonating explosives wrapped around her body. Similarly, some Kurdish women have carried out suicide bombings against Turkish soldiers. Such acts are seen and propagated as "heroic" by

The Prophet of Islam condemned suicide in the strongest terms possible by saying: “Whoever kills himself with an iron tool, then his tool will be in his hand and he will be stabbing himself with it in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever.” And, “Whoever kills himself with poison, then his poison will be in his hand and he will keep taking it in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever. Whoever kills himself by jumping off a cliff, will keep falling in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

others, and to enlist willing volunteers, becomes easy for the organizations that encourage and prepare them to die for their cause. Muslim women who carry out suicidal bombings are most certainly made to believe that their death would instantly bestow upon them the status of a *shaheed*, a martyr, and they would be in the company of the saints and the prophets of Allah. The first Muslim woman to carry out a suicide attack was Sana'a Mehadli, who killed 2 Israeli soldiers and injured two more in Lebanon by killing herself through a vehicle explosion on April 9, 1985. Another Muslim woman was Hanadi Jaradat, who killed 21 people in Haifa in October 2004, by blowing herself up in a family restaurant. Her brother and her fiancé, were both killed by the Israeli forces, therefore, to avenge their deaths by killing Israeli civilians might have appeared justified in her mind. Suicidal killings among Muslims have reached the extremes; the mayhem has become almost an everyday occurring. In Iraq, Afghanistan

and Pakistan, Muslims are killing Muslims by blowing themselves up. The assassination on December 27, 2007, of Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, was apparently for political reasons, and internationally condemned. Initially the details of the attack were not clear, but later a Scotland Yard investigation report stated that she died, when the attacker detonated a powerful suicide bomb while she was waving to her supporters, and its force slammed her head against an escape hatch on her SUV. She was vocal against the terrorist activities of the extremist groups. Pakistan's government suspected that the assassination was carried out by the functionaries of Waziristan's Baitullah Mehsood, who supported the Taliban and al-Qa'eda. The Taliban and al-Qa'eda leadership claims to be staunch Muslims, but their involvement in suicidal bombings and killing innocent civilians, is a complete perversion of Islam's teachings. Suicide in Islam is an unforgivable sin, and to kill anyone

without going through the due process of law is a murder, an abomination. In Islam, any one who commits suicide does not deserve a ritual funeral prayer. The Prophet of Islam condemned suicide in the strongest terms possible by saying: “Whoever kills himself with an iron tool, then his tool will be in his hand and he will be stabbing himself with it in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever.” And, “Whoever kills himself with poison, then his poison will be in his hand and he will keep taking it in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever. Whoever kills himself by jumping off a cliff, will keep falling in the Fire of Hell, forever and ever”, *(Bukhari and Muslim)*. Thus, suicidal murder is sin upon sin. Committing two grave sins together cannot be considered an act of religious merit. Indeed the Qur'an says, “And kill not yourselves. Surely, Allah is Merciful towards you; but whosoever does that by way of transgression and injustice, We shall cast him into Fire, and that is easy for Allah”, (4:29-30). ♦

Does Islam condone suicide bombing?

Sadar Anees Ahmad

The Washington Times recently reported that the Taliban are buying children, as young as 7 years of age and at prices ranging from \$7,000 - \$14,000, to serve as suicide bombers. Suicide attacks, as shocking and horrifying as they are, become an even more warped phenomenon when religion is used for their justification. How can Islam, a religion which literally bears the name 'peace,' condone suicide terrorism?

First, suicide bombing is not solely, nor predominantly, a Muslim phenomenon. In the modern era, suicide bombing gained prominence with efforts of the predominantly Hindu 'Tamil Tiger' Liberation movement in Sri Lanka. Prof. Robert Pape of University of Chicago, an authority on terrorism, considers the Tigers the "leading instigator" of suicide terrorism. In his book "Dying to Win," Pape notes that Muslims are guilty for less than half of all suicide attacks. Furthermore, 30% of Muslim suicide attacks are secularly motivated. Pape concludes that it is not religion, but nationalism which spurs this last resort effort to liberate one's country: "Every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980 has had as its central objective to compel a democratic state to withdraw combat forces from territory that the terrorists prize ... Absent (foreign occupation), we rarely see suicide terrorism." Indeed, the Tamil Tigers are a nationalist, not a religious, terrorist outfit. Lawrence Wright, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book on 9/11 "The Looming Tower," agrees with Pape's core argument.



Still, however few, Muslims are guilty of too many suicide attacks. The argument that Muslim suicide terrorists are uneducated is a myth – the majority is well educated. Pape notes that religion, while not the primary factor in motivating terrorism, is still a factor. The occupied party oftentimes exploits religious differences with that of the occupier to legitimize its cause.

So does Islam condone suicide terrorism? No.

The Qur'an clearly states, "And cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands" (2:196); "And kill not your own selves" (4:30). Prophet Muhammad declared that intentionally killing oneself is tantamount to damnation and ordered his followers to never long for death (Bukhari). Once, following a battle, a Muslim was lauding the efforts of a man who had fought most bravely for the Muslims. On hearing this, Muhammad replied, "Indeed, he is amongst the people of the (Hell) Fire." It was later discovered that the brave man was wounded in battle and drove his sword into his chest, taking his own life (Bukhari).

Still, why do well educated, affluent Muslims become suicide bombers if Islam categorically forbids such behavior? In the

respected conservative mouthpiece *Policy Review*, an enlightening piece entitled "Religion and Economic Development" argues that economic instability provides fertile ground for the birth of suicide terrorists. Today, despite its grip on oil, the Muslim world's combined GDP is less than that of Germany. Coupled with a largely non-existent political process, suicide terrorism is the last resort to annihilate a system the terrorist feels alienated from.

But if Islam condemns suicide terrorism, how can terrorists carry out suicide attacks in the name of Islam? The inspiration for the modern day suicide terrorist is Ayman al-Zawahiri, the #2 man for Al-Qaeda. As Lawrence Wright notes, Zawahiri argues that the Muslim world's situation is so precarious that exceptions regarding suicide must be made. Zawahiri has also misquoted and distorted certain instances of early Muslims in battle to validate suicide attacks. With misguided dreams of rewards that await martyrs in the afterlife, Wright observes that the suicide terrorist's mentality is not to kill, but to die. It is as Friedrich Nietzsche observed, "Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups."

The Paradox of War: Compassion of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}

Aisha Husain Ahmad

“War” invokes images of guns, bloodshed, and the inseparable sense of fear and terror it so casually casts upon its victims. The shattered environment is shrouded with hostility and an instinctual drive for self-preservation that chokes out kindness and compassion, especially at the frontlines. However, in Islam, compassion is given life as one of the most central and basic principles.

The Holy Qur'an states,

“And we pointed out the two highways of good and evil. But he attempted not the steep ascent. And what should make thee know what the steep ascent is? It is the freeing of a slave, or feeding on a day of hunger, an orphan near of kin, or a poor man lying in the dust. Then, he should have been one of those who believe and exhort one another to perseverance and exhort one another to mercy.” Chapter 90: 11-18

Muslims are not allowed to put this principle on hold in times of war and strife. Even in times of war, we must exercise restraint and compassion to everyone around us, including our enemies. For guidance on this



Even when he was fighting in his own defense, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was always sensitive to the enemy's side. He stated that the enemy should sustain the least possible losses.

matter, there is no better example than that of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}.

A *hadith* narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As^{RA} says, “The Merciful One has compassion on those who are compassionate. If you show compassion to those who are on earth, He Who is in Heaven will show compassion to you” (Abu Dawud).

If the purpose of all humans is to acquire the attributes of Allah, then humans must show compassion and mercy to others. Time and time again we are reminded of how merciful, compassionate, and forgiving Allah is. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} was the immaculate human manifestation of these attributes in times of both, peace and war. It is easy to be kind and compassionate in times of peace. In turbulent circumstances, these traits are harder to exhibit. War itself is not an ideal solution according to Islam. The word “jihad” literally means “struggle.” This could entail a myriad of things, not just brutal warfare. In Surah Al-

Baqarah, verse 190, the Holy Qur'an states, “And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.” The verses continue on to state that fighting is only allowed between parties of combatants; no assaults on individuals are allowed. If the enemy desists, then you must desist as well, and then forgive and forget. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} always followed these directives, and he himself laid down very specific instructions regarding rules of engagement during war.

The greatest beauty in these practices was that peace was always kept in view. The persecution that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} faced in his time is well known to all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Even when he was fighting in his own defense, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was always sensitive to the enemy's side. He stated that the enemy should sustain the least possible losses. He also stated that there should be no mutilation of the enemy's dead, which

was a practice to humiliate the opposition in the pre-Islamic period known as *Jahiliyyah*, or *Ignorance*. Children, women, the sick and the elderly should be spared hostilities and the civilian population should not be oppressed. If prisoners are taken, they should be kept in comfort, not tortured. These are only a few of the practices that were outlined by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, but they were all designed to reduce the inherent evil nature of war. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} believed so strongly in these conditions that he stated that if anyone was not willing to honor them, then he would be fighting solely for himself, and not for Allah.²

Compassion demands patience, and more so in times of war. Acting in fury and temper is not conducive to acts of compassion and kindness. That is one reason that anger is forbidden in Islam; it clouds the sense and warps thinking to the point that regrettable actions are committed. The Promised Messiah^{AS}, in his book *The British Government and Jihad*, states, “Despite being brave warriors of stout heart, and despite being persecuted, bloodied with spears and seeing their children killed, they [the companions of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}] did not retaliate.” The Holy Prophet^{SAW} urged his companions to be patient and “anyone begging to retaliate was stopped and told: ‘I have been commanded to be patient.’ Until the commandment to retaliate descended from Heaven, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} always preached forbearance and tolerance.”³

Just think what could have happened if patience had not been exercised! It would have made an already dire situation worse. When one fights for revenge rather than self-defense, innocent people tend to pay the price. It is unfortunate that today’s world portrays Islam as a war-hungry religion, with all Muslims eagerly awaiting opportune moments to wage *jihad*. Nothing is further from the truth.

Muslims are commanded in the Qur’an to adopt the path of peace even when it appears against their interests. They are directed to accept any peace offer, even when they suspect it to be a ruse. They are directed to make their enemy see the fallacies of war. If there must be war, then it is only to be fought to the extent of bringing about peace, not for the sole purpose of killing. Unfortunately, if enemy lives are unnecessarily taken, so are the opportunities for those souls to have been exposed to the beauties of Islam and the possibility that they might have been guided onto the Right Path in the future.² Islam does not take this lightly.

In the pre-Islamic era, those prisoners that were not killed upon capture were tor-

Today’s so-called Muslims who are fighting a “jihad” are blatantly going against these directives laid down by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. They have turned their back on the true and pure teachings and have forgotten what the concept of true jihad really is. It is a struggle to bring the word of Allah to the non-believers. It does not give a license to kill and maim senselessly.

tured and made to beg for food and essentials. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} changed this. A *hadith* states that Muslims should care more for the comfort of their prisoners than their own comfort. Prisoners must be fed and clothed. He also stated that closely related prisoners must be placed together. Provision is also made in case a prisoner is mistreated; that prisoner must be released without any ransom required.

After the Battle of Badr, some prisoners were executed for crimes they had previously committed in Mecca. The others were given the option of either converting to Islam or buying their freedom by paying their ransom. The act of freeing prisoners was in itself a righteous act, a way to absolve one’s sins. If during fighting, the enemy wants to make a study of Islam, the Holy Qur’an states that, “And if any of the idolaters ask protection of thee, grant him protection so that he may hear the word of Allah: then convey him to his place of security. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge.” (Chapter 9: Verse 6). As stated earlier, a prisoner could become free by paying his own ransom. If, however, this was not possible, then the prisoner could work and thus earn the money for his ransom, if he proves his competency.²

Today’s so-called Muslims who are fighting a “jihad” are blatantly going against these directives laid down by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. They have turned their back on the true and pure teachings and have forgotten what the concept of true jihad really is. It is a struggle to bring the word of Allah to the

non-believers. It does not give a license to kill and maim senselessly. Blind are they to the reasons behind these directives; blind are they to the fact that the Holy Qur’an states that war should be avoided. However, Islam is an organized and brilliant religion that has guidelines for every situation. If the situation for war arises, then Islam has strict instructions that insure the least amount of damage to both parties. The condition for war is severe persecution to the point that practicing one’s faith is impossible. Only then are Muslims allowed to take up arms, and lay them down when the enemy desists and freedom of religion is restored.⁴

When these extremists are kidnapping and beheading innocent people, how could they possibly be walking in the path of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}? Critics of Islam state that Muslims are commanded to fight infidels at any cost. However, history bears out that both, Judaism and Christianity, have had their share of senseless slaughters – sometimes against each other. As Muslims, we understand that we cannot blame Judaism and Christianity for the misconduct of various Jews and Christians at various times of history. We would not want to be guilty of the same ignorance that has been imposed against us. This is a time for righteous Muslims to express compassion and patience to those who simply do not understand Islam.

Islam is the only religion that mandates compassion and kindness even in times of war. War typically involves a *no-holds barred* mentality. But Islam offers so many conditions that must be met in order to minimize the evil impact of war. It is well-documented that combatants offered themselves up for capture because of the Holy Prophet’s^{SAW} compassion and mercy towards prisoners, rather than die on the battlefield in accordance with the Arab customs of chivalry. May Allah grant us all the capacity for this level of compassion, so that the hearts of our enemies may soften and the truth and light of Islam and the Holy Prophet^{SAW} prevail. ♦

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War Verses of the Holy Qur'an

Does the Holy Qur'an contradict itself by preaching peace and condoning "violence" at the same time?

By Atif Munawar Mir

The Holy Qur'an promotes peace, condemns violence and considers all forms of life sacred. It emphasizes: "...and that you kill not the life which Allah has made sacred, save by right. That is what He has enjoined upon you, that you may understand", (6:152). The Holy Qur'an also states: "We prescribed for the children of Israel that whosoever killed a person – unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land – it shall be as if he killed all mankind," (5:33).

If the Holy Qur'an declares human life sacred, then why do some verses of the Holy Qur'an permit "violence?" For example, the Holy Qur'an says: "Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks. At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter, (is time for) either generosity or ransom, until the war lays down its burdens..." (47:5).

Does the Holy Qur'an contradict itself by preaching peace and condoning "violence"

at the same time? The answer might be an affirmative from those scholars and journalists who possess only a partial knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and have a limited understanding of Islam's early history. The same question will be answered with a resounding 'no' from those who possess a holistic understanding of the Holy Qur'an and are aware of the historical circumstances in which it was revealed.

The Holy Qur'an does not permit violence. However, it does permit a just war. What is a just war? Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} defines a just war as follows: War undertaken in self defense,(1). War undertaken as chastisement for aggression and,(2). War undertaken for the establishment of freedom of conscience (3). In addition to laying down the principles of a just war, the Holy Qur'an describes the responsibilities of Muslims in the time of war and the reward they deserve for endangering and sacrificing their lives for a just cause. For example, some verses of the Holy Qur'an, (1). implore Muslims not to be coward & fight with conviction and (2). promise them a reward for fighting with bravery. Again, not taken in true context, such verses of the Holy Qur'an might appear to present Islam in a negative light.

Holy Qur'an & the Permission of Defensive Wars

Following are the first two verses which gave Muslims the permission to take up arms in self-defense. "Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged — and Allah indeed has power to help them — Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty", (22:40-41). These verses were revealed before the Battle of Badr, when Muslims were numerically inferior to Meccans and had fewer horses, camels and weapons. According to these verses, Muslims are permitted to wage a defensive war if they have been wronged or driven out of their homes unjustly, on account of their belief. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} explains: "It should also be remembered that Islam permits the taking up of the sword only in opposition to people who themselves take it up first and it permits the slaughter only of those who embark upon slaughter first. It does not lay down that Muslims, while they are the subjects of a non-

Muslim sovereign who deals with them with justice and equity, should take up arms against him as rebels". After permitting Muslims to fight a defensive war, Allah commands them to keep their response proportional to injustices committed against them as said in the Qur'an, "And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors", (2: 191). The next couple of verses of the Holy Qur'an permit Muslims to kill the enemy when the war has broken out; but once the enemy has been subdued or freedom of conscience has been restored, then war must come to an end. In other words, when Muslims are in the position to dictate the terms of war, they must choose peace. "And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not in, and near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers", (2: 192). "But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful", (2:193).

"And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors", (2: 194). In another place, the Holy Qur'an also instructs Muslims as to how they must treat prisoners of war. They must not be humiliated or killed; instead they should be released as a good gesture or for ransom after the aggressor has been defeated. "And when you meet in regular battle those who disbelieve, smite their necks; and, when you have overcome them, bind fast the fetters — then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom — until the war lays down its burdens. That is the ordinance. And if Allah had so pleased, He could have punished them Himself, but He has willed that He may try some of you by others. And those who are killed in the way of Allah — He will never render their works vain", (47:5).

Holy Qur'an & Waging of War for the Sake of Freedom of Conscience

The protection of human life and freedom of belief is absolutely essential to human dignity in Islam. According to the Holy Qur'an: "There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong..." (2:257). The following verse clearly establishes that freedom of conscience is granted to all religions. Burning of churches or synagogues is not condoned by the Holy Qur'an. On the contrary, the next verse makes it incumbent upon Muslim states to protect



The Holy Qur'an permits Muslims to wage war in order to chastise aggressors. It seems to identify three types of aggressors: Parties that transgress, Parties that are hostile and constantly plan the extermination of Muslims and, Parties that don't abide by any covenant.

the religious minorities living in their jurisdictions: "Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty", (22:41). Once war has broken out, Allah commands Muslims to fight until the freedom of conscience has been restored as the Holy Qur'an says: "And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for

Allah. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Watchful of what they do", (8: 40). Elsewhere it says, "And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors", (2: 194).

Holy Qur'an & the Waging of War to Chastise An Aggressor

The Holy Qur'an permits Muslims to wage war in order to chastise aggressors. It seems to identify three types of

aggressors: (1). Parties that transgress, (2). Parties that are hostile and constantly plan the extermination of Muslims and, (3). Parties that don't abide by any covenant. The first type of aggressors are parties which endanger peace. "And if two parties of believers fight against each other, make peace between them; then if after that one of them transgresses against the other, fight the party that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. Then if it returns, make peace between them with equity, and act justly. Verily, Allah loves the just", (49: 10). This verse, along with the ones discussed above, clearly establishes that Allah dislikes

aggression whatever the faith of the perpetrator or the victim. Khalifatul Masih II acknowledges that while this verse primarily “deals with the settlement of disputes between Muslim parties, it equally embodies a sound basis on which a really effective League of Nations or a United Nations Organization can be built. The verse lays down a sound principle for the maintenance of international peace.” The second type of aggressor refers to those parties which are hostile to the Muslim state and are constantly plotting against it for its extermination. According to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II the Holy Qur’an is discussing such a party in its following verse: *“Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor hold as unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have declared to be unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the tax with their own hand and acknowledge their subjection”,* (9: 29). He comments that, “The verse refers to those people of Book who lived in Arabia. Like the idolaters, they too had been actively hostile to Islam and had planned and plotted to exterminate it. Muslims were, therefore, ordered to fight them unless they agreed to live as loyal and peaceful subjects. The *Jizyah* was a tax which these non-Muslims had to pay as free subjects of the Muslim state in return for protection they enjoyed under it. It may be noted that as against *Jizyah* which was imposed on non-Muslims, a much heavier tax – *Zakat* was levied on the Muslims and in addition to *Zakat* they had to perform military service from which non-Muslims were exempt. Thus the latter in a way fared better, for they had to pay a lighter tax and were also free from military duty...” The third type of aggressor is that party which breaks a treaty or covenant. About such an aggressor, the Holy Qur’an says, *“They observe not any tie of relationship or covenant in respect of anyone who trusts them. And it is they who are transgressors”,* (9:10). It continues to say: *“And if they break their oaths after their covenant, and attack your religion, then fight these leaders of disbelief — surely, they have no regard for their oaths — that they may desist”,* (9: 12). Furthermore: *“Will you not fight a people who have broken their oaths, and who plotted to turn out the Messenger, and they were the first to commence hostilities against you? Do you fear them? Nay, Allah is most worthy that you should fear Him, if you are*

believers.”, (9: 13). According to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, these three verses clearly explain as to why Muslims were commanded to wage war against the Meccan idolaters. The reasons for waging war against them are as follows: (1) They were treacherous and perfidious; they professed to be friendly to Muslims, but as soon as they found an opportunity to injure them, they broke their oaths. (2) They disregarded even the ties of relationship and slew their own kinsmen merely because the latter had embraced Islam. (3) Their object in making war was to prevent men from embracing Islam. (4) They attacked Muslims first.

Holy Qur’an & Fight for Just Cause with Conviction

It is clear that a war of just cause must be waged and thus such a war becomes incumbent upon every Muslim to fight with conviction, bravery and valor, as the existence of Muslim community, its freedom of conscience and/or international justice are at stake. That is why the Holy Qur’an makes the participation in a just war mandatory and calls upon all Muslims to carry out their duties with bravery, unless they have good reason to do otherwise. The Holy Qur’an states: *“And what is the matter with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and of the weak — men, women and children — who say, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and make for us some friend from Thyself, and make for us from Thyself some helper?’”,* (4: 76). *“If you do not go forth to fight, He will punish you with a painful punishment, and will choose in your stead a people other than you, and you shall do Him no harm at all. And Allah has full power over all things”,* (9: 39). *“Verily, Allah loves those who fight in His cause arrayed in solid ranks, as though they were a strong structure cemented with molten lead”,* (61: 5). *“O ye who believe! fight such of the disbelievers as are near to you and let them find hardness in you; and know that Allah is with the righteous”,* (9: 123). *“There is no blame on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor is there blame on the sick, if they go not forth for fight. And whoso obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will make him enter the Gardens beneath which streams flow; but whoso turns his back, him will He punish with a grievous punishment”,* (48: 18). One of the purposes of these verses of the Holy Qur’an, is the same as Winston Churchill’s speeches in World War II: to inspire soldiers to fight aggressive forces.

Holy Qur’an & Reward for Those who Fight

Armies reward soldiers who have fought bravely in war with medals. Allah, of course, doesn’t issue medals but promises a great reward to those who die in a war of just cause. *“Let those then fight in the cause of Allah who would sell the present life for the Hereafter. And whoso fights in the cause of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, We shall soon give him a great reward”,* (4: 75). *“Surely, Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their property in return for the Garden they shall have; they fight in the cause of Allah, and they slay and are slain — a promise that He has made incumbent on Himself in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur’an. And who is more faithful to his promise than Allah? Rejoice, then, in your bargain which you have made with Him; and that it is which is the supreme triumph”,* (9: 111).

It is true that more than a few Muslims have justified their terrorist actions by invoking the “violent” verses of the Holy Qur’an. But as discussed above, these verses are anything but violent when understood in their textual and historical context. The murderous actions of a terrorist are often driven by utter despair, complete hatred and/or political aims; all this baggage is often cloaked under the verses of the Holy Qur’an. The Qur’an cites “the past to show that those who perpetuate brutality in religion’s name are either anti-religious or people whose religion has been corrupted. There are also religious leaders who have no warmth, compassion, mercy or piety... they are hypocrites with a lust for power — cruelty is their ruling passion. It would be a great mistake to associate religion with the misdeeds of such men.” The Holy Qur’an does not preach war. It discourages it but acknowledges that war is a part of human condition and therefore prescribes rules and regulations of war. The Qur’anic verses that deal with war and “violence” are guidelines against which Muslims are to determine what a just war is and, are strengthening verses that urge Muslims to fight courageously, once war becomes inevitable, and promises them a reward for sacrificing and endangering their lives to protect their faith and to punish the aggressor.

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Mercy: The Most Divine Attribute in the Holy Qur'an

By Shazia Sohail

When a Muslim decides to live his life according to Islamic teachings, the mosaic of his life starts to reflect daily decisions based on the Will of Allah, as described in the Holy Qur'an. This is made possible by its daily recitation, followed by deep reflection upon the various verses contained in it. These verses have been referred to, time and again, as the Signs of Allah. They are so and multifaceted in meaning, that the person who is in tune to God's presence in his life, will find guidance in them for his daily affairs and concerns. In this way God Almighty, out of His attribute of infinite Mercy, guides the spiritual and physical growth of man, so he can be a source of mercy to people around him. When a man exhibits this growth to perfection, he becomes a source of mercy to all. Thus God Almighty addresses Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in these words: *'And We have sent thee not but as a Mercy for all peoples', (21:108).*

Mercy for Mankind

The Holy Qur'an is unequivocal in its assertion, that a nation can claim superiority over others so long as it can claim to be a source of continuous and abundant benefit to them, as is said in, *'You are the best people raised for the good of mankind (3:111).'* This doing of good progresses outwards in concentric circles, with the individual being in the center. The closest circle is that of close family members, next are the extended family, then one's neighbors and associates, the disenfranchised, complete strangers, and then anyone that one has the ability to help. Thus the Holy Qur'an states:

'Worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and be benevolent towards parents, and kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor who is near and the neighbor who is far, and your associates, and the wayfarer, and those who are under your control', (4:37).

This verse is so comprehensive that in effect, a Muslim has been enjoined to include the entire mankind in the scope of his mercy.

Mercy for Self

The first part of verse 4:37, *'Worship Allah and associate naught with Him'*, liberates man from all worldly considerations, so he is free to develop those parts of his

faculties, that fill his heart with mercy for the people around him. In order for one to devote one's life to the good of mankind, it is imperative that one is motivated to do so. One attains this state through worship. As one draws closer to God, He directs his attention back to the people around him. This process continues to get more and more intense with repetition till a state is achieved regarding which the Qur'an says, *'Then he drew nearer to God, then he came down to mankind', (53:9).'* Drawing nearer to God is a journey that is facilitated by the Merciful God Himself. When a person starts his path towards God with a clean heart, God overlooks and forgives his faults, and guides him toward greater opportunities for doing good. Nothing attracts His forgiveness and mercy faster than an act of kindness and forgiveness on the part of man. *'And if you overlook and forgive and pardon, then surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful', (64:15).* Man is helped along the path of kindness and mercy by God Himself who encourages him as He says, *'Whoso does a good deed shall have ten times as much; but he who does an evil deed, shall have only a like reward; and they shall not be wronged', (6:161).* One receives greater ability to do good by disciplining oneself through the various modes of worship. Besides receiving succor from God Almighty, one starts to enjoy more benefits that nature, as created by God, rewards him for his efforts. The five daily prayers, when performed in exact accordance with Divine direction, impart personal assets like cleanliness, good mental and physical health, punctuality and orderliness. Fasting improves and regulates one's eating habits and facilitates weight control. Charity improves the quality of the environment and society one lives in. Therefore, God's rewards are attracted in accordance with one's wishes, as the Qur'an says, *'And whoever desires the reward of the present world, We will give him thereof; and whoever desires the reward of the life to come, We will give him thereof', (3:146).* Some of the moral values mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, are chastity, honesty, humility, refraining from inflicting pain, courtesy, forbearance, equity, benevolence, graciousness as between kindred, truthfulness, steadfastness, and sympathy for mankind. Even though their practice directly affects fellow beings, it just as directly serves to enhance one's spirituality i.e. his relation-

ship with God, and becomes a source of peace and contentment for oneself. This is how peace travels outwards from the center of a social circle.

Mercy for Family

The primary area of operation of a Muslim is his home where he defines his humanity by virtue of the various roles he



plays. This is where he enjoys, in a manner of speaking, sovereignty, since he spends of his wealth on those living under his care. How he uses that power in his limited domain, will determine the extent to which he has molded himself in the image of the Merciful God. In the simplest of words God Almighty, asks him to treat his parents better than they treated him, and never show any sign of displeasure to them, once they have attained old age. This alone is a feat that would require a lifetime of service and self-control. The Arabic word for ‘mercy’ is *rehm*, which is also the word for ‘womb’. Thus the attribute *Rahman*, or Merciful, of God, emanates from the same element as the womb of a mother, and all relationships emanating from the womb are called *rehmi* ties, about which God admonishes, ‘*And fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship*’, (4:2). This underscores the fact that anyone who strengthens ties with *rehmi* relations, draws from the fountain of God’s mercy, and whoever severs ties with close relations, severs himself from Allah’s mercy, such that his prayers are not heard.¹ Thus a person’s parents, children, and spouse have a claim on his mercy and wealth during his life and a predetermined

share in inheritance.² One cannot deprive the rightful heirs of more than one third of one’s wealth by will.³ Where there is abundant wealth it is suggested that one should recognize the share of deserving relatives and the poor as well, (51:20). This system of equitable distribution of wealth, combined with *Zakat*, a mandatory tax on wealth for social welfare⁴, and prohibition of interest⁵, is a powerful mechanism to ensure social justice and economic stability.

Mercy for the Orphan and the Needy

Everyday children are left orphans due to accidents, murders, disease, or natural disasters. Such children find themselves at the mercy of guardians who become responsible for safeguarding their property. God enjoins, ‘*And come not near the property of the orphan, except in the best way, until he attains his maturity, and fulfill the covenant; for the covenant shall be questioned about*’, (17:35). The Holy Qur’an is unique in giving detailed instructions to protect the property of minors, who cannot call their guardians to account for fraudulence. Here the Merciful God has given the charge of orphans the status of a divine covenant, the breach of which, would be severely punished. The wider significance of the word ‘covenant’ is that, it may refer to any powerful individual or nation that takes under its protection, a weaker individual or nation. God considers all good deeds performed by man as a loan to Himself, to be returned manifold, as is written in the Qur’an, ‘*Who is it that will lend Allah a goodly loan that He may multiply it for him manifold? And Allah receives and enlarges*’, (2:246). This includes all acts of charity and kindness, even towards prisoners, as is said in, ‘*And they feed, for love of Him, the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner*’, (76:9).

Mercy for the Neighbor who is Near (kindred) and the Neighbor who is Far (stranger)

The wide definition of ‘neighbor’ here, points to community members, be it a tribe, a religious community, a school or college campus community, or just a neighborhood with people of diverse backgrounds and

religions. The guiding principle is, ‘*Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred*’, (16:91). Justice is the minimum level of goodness, one owes to a fellow human. It behoves a seeker after Allah’s Mercy, to go a step further and return an act with one that is better; but the highest moral conduct is to treat others with the same graciousness as a mother would treat her own child.

Mercy for the Associate

A ‘companion by your side’ could be one’s spouse, colleague, trade partner, or comrade on a journey. God enjoins a Muslim to be kind and forbearing towards one’s associates and appreciate whatever good qualities he finds in them. Even when he is wont to judge them harshly, he should remember that there may be some good in them that is hidden from his eyes and God sees even those actions and thoughts of man that are completely hidden from others – the similitude of which is given as ‘*And there falls not a leaf but He knows it; nor is there a grain in the deep darkness of the earth, nor anything green or dry, but is recorded in a clear Book*’, (6:60). Thus only He has the right to judge people. The guiding principle of a Muslim’s life should be ‘*Repel evil with that which is best. And lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity will become as though he were a warm friend*’, (41:35).

Mercy for the Traveler

It is out of His infinite mercy that ‘*Allah disdains not to give an illustration as small as a gnat or even smaller*’, (2:27). Anyone who has ever undertaken a journey, knows the value of kindness shown to one by complete strangers. Tourists, foreigners, guests, or anyone who is far away from home, come under the all-encompassing umbrella of God’s mercy by finding repeated mention as ‘*wayfarer*’ in the Holy Qur’an.

Mercy for Those Under One’s Control

There are numerous injunctions, spanning the widest possible range, that prohibit the abuse of power. Time and again, God Almighty reminds people in authority,

about the immensity of His power over them⁶ and that they should strive to wield it as judiciously as He does. All of us subliminally enjoy some degree of supremacy over the disabled and the sick; in pre-Islamic culture people were averse to eating with them. The Merciful God put an end to it by revealing, *'There is no harm for the blind and there is no harm for the lame, and there is no harm for the sick and none for yourselves, that you eat together or separately'*, (24:62). He seeks to protect the dignity of the poor by the enjoining of giving alms secretly (2:272) and, at the time of division of inheritance, if distant relatives, orphans, or the poor are present, to give them something from it as well and speak words of kindness to them (4:9). He reminds us to be mindful of the fact that there are many animals that depend on Him for their sustenance, just like humans do (29:61); feeding them is akin to doing God's work. In our wealth He has placed a share of the needy, even if they cannot bring themselves to ask for it (51:20). This definition of the needy requires us to be vigilant towards the needs of all living creatures in our environment. Slavery was rampant at the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and continued to exist in non-Muslim societies for centuries afterwards. Even today, it exists in one form or another in many parts of the world. But no religion has assigned a loftier status to the one who frees a slave than Islam has (90:13-14).

Responsibilities in One's Professional Capacity

The overriding principle in one's professional conduct is to deliver the quality and quantity of goods and services promised for the remuneration being received; in a nutshell, the Holy Qur'an commands to, *'give full measure and full weight, and diminish not unto people their things'*, (7:86). Conducting fraudulent enterprise is forbidden (11:86); and honesty is urged as said in, *'And confound not truth with falsehood nor hide the truth, knowingly'*, (2:43). Certain individuals carry a high burden of culpability. Foremost among them, are those involved in the process of dispensing justice. The judge has been admonished: *'When you judge between men, you judge with justice'*, (4:59) and, seeking to ensure justice for minorities, the Qur'an stipulates: *'let not a people's en-*

mity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness', (5:9). The witness has been enjoined as such: *'O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are.... And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do'*, (4:136). When a contract is being ratified it must be written down, as prescribed, *'And no scribe should refuse to write, because Allah has taught him'*, (2:283) and, the Merciful God, ever watchful of the interest of the weak, enjoins, *'But if the person incurring the liability be of low understanding or be weak or be unable himself to dictate, then let someone who can watch his interest dictate with justice. And call two witnesses from among your men'*, (2:283). With amazing attention to detail, He further enjoins, *'And let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness'*, (2:283). Furthermore, the witness has been enjoined to *'conceal not testimony; and whoever conceals it, his heart is certainly sinful. And Allah is well aware of what you do'*, (2:284).

Responsibilities of Those in Authority

The picture of a benevolent ruler, who is also democratic in nature, emerges from reading the Qur'an. He is bound by Divine law to try to provide the primary necessities of life, like food, clothing, water, and shelter, to his subjects, as is stipulated: *'It is decreed for thee that thou shall not hunger therein nor shall thou be naked. And that thou shall not thirst therein, nor shall thou be exposed to the sun'*, (20:119-120). The Qur'an identifies and criticizes any abusive ruler by stating, *'When he is in authority, he runs about in the land to create disorder in it and destroys the tilth and the progeny of man; and Allah loves not disorder'*, (2:206). The Arabic word employed for 'tilth' in this context, refers to agriculture, economy, and health of women,⁷ and the tilth and the progeny of man refer to general health care.⁸ Thus, the expectations of the Merciful God from a statesman are that, in the spirit of *'a ruler is a steward and is accountable for his charge'*⁹ he will strive to restore the basic amenities of life to his people, and establish peace and prosperity by regulating

agriculture, economy, and health care. The democratic mode of governance is sought to be ensured by *'consult them in matters of administration'*, (3:160). The right of a ruler to assign positions of authority has been termed as a divine trust and God advises him to *'make over the trusts to those entitled to them'*, (4:59); meaning, he should delegate authority to only those who are qualified and no other consideration should affect his decision. He should *'be strict in observing justice'*, (4:136). For example, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) refused to say the funeral prayers of a person whose debts were likely to remain unpaid by his heirs.¹⁰ We read in the Holy Qur'an, that every prophet of God experienced the magnificence of His Mercy and urged people to act in a manner that would bring them closer to the Merciful God. We find a beautiful depiction of the reality of Allah's Mercy when King Solomon (peace be on him) has a palace built with glass slabs on the floor, with water running beneath them, to illustrate His understanding of God's role in his life (27:45). This illustration has been left open to interpretation; but the humble prayer of this great king was,

'My Lord, grant me the will and power to be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do such good works as would please Thee, and admit me, by Thy mercy, among Thy righteous servants', (27:20)

One might safely conclude, that King Solomon^{as} might have been trying to tell us that this life is like water and we walk on the invisible slab of Allah's Mercy. If we let this slab shatter through neglect, then we can become a victim of natural causes and life can simply drown us. ♦

References Address of Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV, to ladies, on July 28, 1992. Published in *Daughters of Eve*, by Lajna Imaillah USA. Page 33.4:12; 4:13; 4:177 Bukhari HYPERLINK "<http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=234®ion=E1&CR=EN,E2>" <http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=234®ion=E1&CR=EN,E2> 44, 84, 111, 178; 4:163; 5:56; 9:11; 21:74; 23:5 2:276; 3:131; 30:402:108; 3:190; 5:41; 7:159; 9:116; 43:86; 57:6Farid, Malik Gulam, The Holy Quran, With English Translation and Short Commentary (Islamabad, UK: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1994). Page 85Ahmad, Mirza Tahir. *Some Distinctive Features of Islam* (Islamabad, UK: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1992)Khan, Muhammad Zafrullah. *Gardens of the Righteous* (Islamabad, UK: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1996). Page 69 HYPERLINK "<http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=504®ion=E1&CR=EN,E2>" <http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=504®ion=E1&CR=EN,E2>

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Islam

By Zia H Shah MD

With the election of a son of a Kenyan man to the highest office in USA we see gradual perfection of the vision expressed in the words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” But at the same time, suicidal bombings by terrorist, the outrageous violations of human rights in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, the indifference to the so called collateral damage in air bombings, have again rekindled the question as to what are the human rights and where do they come from. The events since September 11, 2001 have jolted every citizen of the planet earth with renewed quaking and put them on a quest to look for answers. Is life of an American more sacred than a non-American? What if he or she is a Muslim? Are all humans truly created equal? Where did the words, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal;’ come from? To one exposed to Western propaganda only, these words came from the pen of President Thomas Jefferson, as he authored United States Declaration of Independence in 1776. But

a more cultured Westerner may know what Wikipedia mentions, under the heading *all men are created equal*, “Many of the ideas in the Declaration were borrowed from the English liberal political philosopher John Locke.” But that is where Western scholarship ends. Locke lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Such is the dissociation of the Western writers in terms of ignoring the beauties of Islam, that they can attribute all such liberal ideas with a straight face to Western philosophers, despite the fact the Muslim literature has been replete with mention of the Holy Prophet Muhammad saying to a crowd of more than a hundred thousand people, at the time of the final pilgrimage, an event that itself symbolizes human equality, “All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal. Allah has made you brethren one to another, so be not divided. An Arab has no preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred to a dark one, nor a dark one to a white one.” The whole of his sermon is recorded in history and has been more famous and cherished than the Gettysburg address in the Muslim world over the centuries. This is where human equality began, not only for the Muslims but for the whole of humanity!

Fast forward to World War II. Dr. Andrew Conway Ivy was appointed by the American Medical Association as its representative at the 1946 Nuremberg Medical Trial for Nazi doctors. By 1945 he was probably ‘the most famous doctor in the country.’ He wrote, “Only in a moral world, a world of responsibility, can man be free and live as a human being should. Men are truly equal and free only as creatures of God, because only as the children of God and only in the sight of God and ultimate moral law are men truly equal.”¹ In the Nuremberg trial he struggled with the question that if man-made law is the sole source of basic human rights, why condemn the Nazi assault on Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and political enemies; and having been shaken by this perplexing trial he concluded:

“If God and the ultimate moral law are denied, there can be no absolute argument against slavery, against ‘might makes right’ and man’s greedy exploitation of man. If human beings have no absolute intrinsic value, no absolute intrinsic freedom of decision, no absolute liberty, no absolute duties, they possess only extrinsic value and may be used as chattels, slaves or serfs by those who have the intelligence and power.”²

It took the catalyst of World War II, after millions of casualties, to propel human rights onto the global stage and into the global conscience. On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the 56 members of the United Nations. The vote was unanimous, although eight nations chose to abstain. Articles one and two could be considered paraphrasing, in contemporary legal terminology, of what the Prophet Muhammad had said in his address at the time of last pilgrimage, or what President Thomas Jefferson wrote more than a millennium later. Article one states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” As the Prophet delivered his farewell speech in the eighth year after migration to Medina, to an unprecedented large gathering, standing on the back of his camel *Qaswa*, he raised his hands and joined the fingers of the one hand with the fingers of the other and then said, “Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right, any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers.”^{3 4 5}

Article two of the universal declaration announces, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” In the contemporary world the letter of the law exists but the spirit is missing. Prophet Muhammad linked the sanctity of human rights to the human appreciation of sacredness; as he addressed a sobbing and spell

bound crowd of pilgrims, to the very first house ever built for remembrance of one God, “Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has God made the lives, property and honor of every man sacred. To take any man’s life or his property, or attack his honor, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory.” The echoes of the words would reverberate, with deep emotional conviction, for centuries to come in the known world.

Encyclopedia Britannica describes one of the Presidents of the UN General Assembly Sir Zafrulla Khan in these words, “He became the new country’s minister of foreign affairs and served concurrently as leader of Pakistan’s delegation to the UN (1947–54). From 1954 to 1961 he served as a member of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. He again represented Pakistan at the UN in 1961–64 and served as president of the UN General Assembly in 1962–63. Returning to the International Court of Justice in 1964, he served as the court’s president from 1970 to 1973.”⁶ He wrote an excellent small book that compares all the articles of the Universal Declaration with the Quranic teachings. The book is titled *Islam and Human Rights* and is available for a free download from Alislam.org. Author’s deep appreciation of the law and insight into the religion of Islam and its holy scripture the Holy Quran make it a must read for every man of conscience:

<http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Islam-HR.pdf>

It will not be unfair to challenge apologists of other religions especially those who are vitriolic against Islam, like Don Richardson, to show such correlation between human rights and their respective scriptures. They may have tall claims to make but those need to be substantiated from their scriptures and the history of respective scriptures; otherwise it only amounts to hollow Monday morning quarterbacking.

George A. Makdisi (1920-2002), Professor Emeritus of Arabic & Islamic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, writes about lack of general information about Islam, “The cultured Christian layman is aware of his religious debt to Judaism, and of his intellectual debt to Greco-Roman antiquity;

but, generally speaking, he is not aware of any debt to classical Islam. The very idea may cause him to smile indulgently, or to dismiss the suggestion as unworthy of his attention some legacy from Islam.”⁷ ⁸ In an article published in the Journal of the American Oriental Society, he argues that scholarship and learning that made the foundation of Italian Renaissance can be adequately explained only on purely Islamic-Arabic grounds.⁹

As regards the religious equality, Islam is the only religion that recognizes all the other religions including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism and states that founders of all these religions were prophets of God. The approach of other religions is in mark contradiction to this. For example, the official position of Judaism would be that Christianity is a false religion as they do not believe in Jesus Christ at all. In other words followers of most religions consider the other religions as inherently fake except for Islam. So, it would be fair to say that whereas Islam is fully in compliance with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as it pertains to religion; the other religions do not recognize each other, sufficiently, so there is always potential for conflict when stakes are high.

In sphere of ethnic human equality, fourteen hundred years after the Holy Prophet Muhammad declared that the white have no superiority over the black or an Arab over a non-Arab; Western science was struggling with Polygenetic theory of human origin to prove the superiority of the Caucasian race over the other races. The Holy Quran declares, “O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and subtribes that you may know one another.”¹⁰ No wonder, Arnold Joseph Toynbee had to confess, “The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue.”¹¹

EPILOGUE

World peace cannot be secured if we only pay lip service to the ideals expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Something has to inspire the passions of not only the leaders but also the

masses, to implement these ideals in real life situations. This is where the role of religion comes to play. Let me conclude in the words of the famous historian Arnold Toynbee pertaining to racial equality in Islam, “On two historic occasions in the past, Islam has been the sign in which an Oriental society has risen up victoriously against an Occidental intruder. ... If the present situation of mankind were to precipitate a ‘race war,’ Islam might be moved to play her historic role once again.”¹² For a more extensive review for Islamic teachings about Universal Brotherhood see November, 2009 Alislam – eGazette:

<http://www.alislam.org/egazette/>

(Endnotes)

¹ The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe. Edited by John Clover Monsma. GP Putnam’s sons, New York, published in 1958. Page 240.

² The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe. Edited by John Clover Monsma. GP Putnam’s sons, New York, published in 1958. Page 240.

³ <http://www.alislam.org/egazette/eGazette-Dec2007.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Life-of-Muhammad.pdf>

⁵ http://www.alislam.org/library/books/muhammad_seal_of_the_prophets/

⁶ “Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan.”

Encyclopædia Britannica. 2009.

Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 21 Oct. 2009 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/655322/Sir-Muhammad-Zafrulla-Khan>>.

⁷ George Makdisi. Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West. Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 109, No. 2. (Apr. - Jun., 1989), pp. 175-182.

⁸ <http://www.jstor.org>

⁹ George Makdisi. Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West. Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 109, No. 2. (Apr. - Jun., 1989), pp. 175-182.

¹⁰ Al Quran 49:14.

¹¹ Arnold Joseph Toynbee. Civilization on trial: Essays. Published by Oxford University Press, 1948. Chapter: Islam the West and the Future. Page 205.

¹² Arnold Joseph Toynbee. Civilization on trial: Essays. Published by Oxford University Press, 1948. Last page of the chapter: Islam the West and the Future.

Poetry Corner

THE SATELLITE

By Micah Taair

Satellite Defined:

1.A body that revolves around a larger planet.

2.A follower or attendant attached to a prince or other person of importance..

3.A device designed to be launched from the earth into orbit around a planet or the sun. (Webster's Dictionary)

Satellite O Satellite

I scoped you from my earthly place

Circling the moon in the outer regions
of space

Circling the sun in the outer regions of
space

Circling the One in the outer regions
of space

And time has passed since you passed
from this place

The place you were created and
launched up from

Satellite O Satellite

Do you remember the earth where
you began deep-rooted

And sprouted unpolluted unclouded in
the light of the sun

Programmed and computed

Once in the womb by a scientist spirit

Then once again by that same scientific
spirit

A surge of Arabic in words

Spoke over static that switched you to
automatic

Piloting of your piety

Quantity plus quality manufactures a



Satellite O Satellite

First star from a

Surah verse I've

seen in this life

I wish I may I wish I might

Bask as you bask in light upon light

Light upon light upon light upon light

The height and width of your spiritual
girth was worth

Much more than a manned mission to
Mars

Your transmission was ours to receive
and we believe

In the continual existence of the soul
of the Satellite O Satellite

Into the depths of the universe you did
probe

Brought knowledge and truth

Funneled through your frontal lobe

Transmitted around the globe

Left my head spinning like a strobelite

In the darkness trying to reflect
whatever light

I could capture from you and send

back out into the darkness

Of a universal black agnostic void and
even that's

Written on a scroll wrapped up in a

black hole

And I know cause the

Satellite scanned the

surface of man

And sent back images

Evidence that water flows underneath

Living proof that a human soul could
soak

Forty thousand leagues under a sea of
divine wisdom

A kingdom comes by way of the
Satellites

The Satellite

Absorbed its light through three solar
panels Ears, eyes and heart

It's not 500 channels but from One all
things start To broadcast live from

London It's late night with a gift to
mankind

You can even get online to view the
sublime but

From the telly my vision views pure
revelation

From the telly my vision views pure al
Nur

Trouble with your reception? You
need to bang on the box

Wrap the tin foil of Islam around

your antenna
So you can get a clear picture of the
sun and moon and stars
Abubakarian stars, Bilalian stars,
Salmanian stars
Stars like these but portrayed today
Live on the screen the likeness of
their image
Reflects in a young Punjabis eyes
In a young Nigerians eyes
In a young Chicagoans eyes
And whether viewed on screen or in
a dream
A portion of heavenly light is
beamed
And bounced back off of the Satel-
lite
My Satellite
Dishes out 'bout forty blessings a
day
Its heart beeped tabligh in rhythmic
sessions of Q&A
Lessons for you and me and even
the Non-Ahmadis
Debated on how to capture the
masses
While you effortlessly radiated
through magnified glasses
Strategically placed by angels
around your aura
Surrounded by and ocean like Bora
Bora
But the water was a blessing - and
you wasn't letting
That water remain stored up
Nor was you some sorta donkey
hauling a Torah
You were rehearsing it and then
dispersing it

In cursing fits haters hoped you
would fall to earth
Leave a crater of dirt and spurt hate
like them
They was hating on him this reflec-
tion of Rasoolah
Made the mullahs shake and the
sheiks spend more moolla
Trying to take out the Satellite
O Satellite
With the blessed face and the
blessed smile
With the blessed voice and the
blessed style
Of conversation that left many tribes
and many nations blessed
Blessed, blessed like moments when
you entered a room
Blessed even was the way you
would stress your *kums*
When responding melodically
Asalaamalaikum
To your loyal subjects
Who existed as small tiny insignifi-
cant particles
Who were lost in space and time
Until the time of divine mercy came
And your bestowed divine gravity
pulled them close
Close enough to spiritually touch
Blessed we were, yes, blessed even
as dust to orbit
The Satellite, that top of the line
satellite
That hope for mankind satellite
That updated for the times satellite
Based on the original designed
prototype
For sure it's bright perhaps due to

the night
Nevertheless we all moth together
towards this light
Which you inherited from way back
when
You sat by the light of another
Satellite
Who sat by the light of another
Satellite
Who sat by the light of another
Satellite
Who sat by the light of the moon
Which reflected the sun
Created by One unseen All Powerful
being
It seems you living that Moham-
medan dream
And in the Dream State we die to
see you
Cause in this life we cannot tune in
to view you live
For you are with us no more on
earth
As it is in heaven we adore your
memory through televised lore
And the spirit of Hazur lives on
inside the G4
Satellite O Satellite
I scoped you from my earthly place
Circling the moon in the outer
regions of space
Circling the sun in the outer regions
of space
Circling the One in the outer regions
of space
And time has passed since you
passed from this place
The place you were created and
launched up from

Q&A

How does one fulfill the Pilgrimage or Hajj?

The fifth act of Islamic worship is the performing of the Hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca. A Muslim must perform this pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime if economic and political conditions are favorable. The focal point of this pilgrimage is the Ka'ba, which was rebuilt by Prophet Abraham some 4,000 years ago. Today, the Ka'ba stands in the middle of a large courtyard of Masjid al Haram or the Sacred Mosque. The courtyard of Masjid al Haram contains, besides Ka'ba, the Maqam a Ibrahim and the fountain of Zamzam.

The Hajj is performed during the Muslim month of Dhul Hijjah which comes two months after the festival of Eid al Fitr. The various ceremonies of the Hajj include:

1. Entering into the state of ihram by wearing only two seamless white sheets. This is done by the pilgrims when they reach certain designated places close to Mecca.

2. Saying of talbiyah starting at the place where the ihram is worn. Talbiyah consists of saying aloud the following:

Here we come, O God, here we come No partner have You, here we come

Indeed, praise and blessings are Yours, and the Kingdom too No partner have You, here we come

3. On entering Mecca, the pilgrims perform the first tawaf which consists of going around the Ka'ba seven times in an anticlockwise direction.

4. After completing the tawaf, the pilgrims perform the sa' yy which consists of running between the two little hills of Safa and Marwa located near the Ka'ba. These are the two hills where Hajirah ran in search of water when Prophet Abraham had to leave her there on Divine command.

5. After performing the sa' yy, the pilgrims move to Mina, a plain located about four miles east of Mecca, and spend the night there.

6. Next morning, the pilgrims leave for the Plain of Arafat located nine miles south-east of Mecca. They arrive there in the early afternoon, say the combined Zuhr and Asr Prayers and listen to a sermon given by the

Imam. The pilgrims stay in the Plain of Arafat only till sunset. This is the same plain where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his farewell sermon.

7. After sunset the pilgrims leave Arafat and come to a place called Muzdalifah. In the Holy Quran, this place is referred to as al Mash'ar al Haram, the Sacred Monument. On reaching Muzdalifah, the pilgrims say their combined Maghrib and Isha Prayers and spend the night there. In the morning, after saying the Fajr Prayer, the pilgrims return to Mina once again.

8. The pilgrims reach Mina on the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah. This is the busiest day of the pilgrimage. The first ceremony that is performed at Mina is the throwing of small stones or ramy al jimar. In this ceremony the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars in a symbolic act of striking the devil.

9. The tenth day of Dhul Hijjah is also the day when pilgrims sacrifice their animals. This day is also celebrated all over the Muslim world as the festive day of Eid al Adha.

10. After performing the sacrifice the pilgrims have their heads shaved or their hair clipped. After this they emerge from the state of ihram by wearing their everyday clothes.

11. Clad in their everyday clothes the pilgrims perform another tawaf of the Ka'ba. This tawaf is called tawaf e ziarat.

12. Before the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah ends, the pilgrims perform another sa' yy between the hills of Safa and Marwa.

13. After this the pilgrims return once again to Mina where they stay until the twelfth or thirteenth day of Dhul Hijjah. During these two or three days the pilgrims continue to perform the ceremony of ramy al jimar or throwing of stones.

14. On the afternoon of the twelfth Dhul Hijjah (or of the thirteenth) the pilgrims return to Mecca for the last ceremony of the pilgrimage. This ceremony consists of the farewell tawaf of the Ka'ba after which the entire pilgrimage is completed and the pilgrims are free to go wherever they wish.



Although not part of the prescribed pilgrimage, many pilgrims carry on to Medina and visit Masjid al Nabvi or the Prophet's Mosque. It was in the compound of this Mosque that Prophet Muhammad was buried.

While the Hajj may only be performed during the prescribed dates of the month of Dhul Hijjah, a Lesser Pilgrimage called Umrah may be made individually at any time during the year.

What is the purpose of Eid ul Adha?

Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) is a festival comes about ten weeks after Eid-ul-Fitr, and marks the completion of Hajj (Holy pilgrimage to Mecca). It is the festival of Sacrifice that commemorates the obedience of Abraham and his son Ishmael to the commandment of Allah.

Abraham had a series of dreams in which he saw himself sacrificing his eldest son Ishmael. He inferred that it was perhaps the will of God that he should sacrifice the life of his son. Abraham, being most obedient to God, was about to sacrifice the life of his son Ishmael, when God commanded him to stop and gave him the good news that he had indeed fulfilled His command.

God was so pleased with Abraham's spirit of sacrifice and obedience that He multiplied his progeny into billions. He was also given the great honor of being the forefather of the Holy Prophet of Islam. On the day of Eid those Muslims who can afford to sacrifice an animal are enjoined to do so after Eid Prayer.

In his Eid Sermon of 1983, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV, asked the wealthy Ahmadis to go to the homes of their poor brethren to wish them happy Eid and offer them gifts. In compliance of this directive, the delectation of Eid in Ahmadi society has escalated significantly and this is the very substance and philosophy of Islamic festival of Eid.

Love For All. Hatred For None.

Originally printed in the 11/17/09
edition of the *USA Today*

“U.S.-Muslim Community”

**By Sohail Husain,
New Haven, Connecticut**

Dear Editor:

My heart goes out to the victims of the Fort Hood shooting and their families. Although we await more details of the investigation, most troubling to me was that the alleged shooter, Maj. Nidal Hasan, was a physician and a Muslim.

I am also a physician and a Muslim, belonging to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. More than 100 years ago, our founder condemned any violence in the name of Islam.

Decades before 9/11, we proudly displayed our motto: Love for all, hatred for none. We continue to display it. This American-Muslim physician mourns the tragedy at Fort Hood and stands with his nation against the insanity.

Originally printed in the 11/13/09
edition of the
Los Angeles Times

“Pleas for Tolerance”

**By Ahsan Mahmood Khan,
Yorba Linda, California**

Dear Editor:

Physicians take an oath to do no harm. Soldiers swear to protect their nation. True Muslims who follow the sacred teachings of the Koran love their fellow human beings and profess their faith with peace, not bloodshed.

The alleged Ft. Hood shooter, sadly, violated all three covenants.

May God bless the fallen and wounded and grant strength and resolve to their families.

Originally printed in the 11/10/09
edition of the *Washington Post*

“Faith and the Fort Hood Shootings”

**By Qasim Rashid,
Richmond, Virginia**

Dear Editor:

Every soldier in our military takes a solemn oath to protect our nation against attacks, foreign and domestic. Nov. 5, 2009, will be remembered as a day when, sadly, our military was

*That the accused
gunman's intentions
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Islam.*

forced to protect our nation from a domestic attack. As we mourn the passing of 13 of our departed, we celebrate the soldiers and civilians who took action to resolve this crisis.

That the accused gunman's intentions have been tied to his faith is disappointing. It would be a dire mistake to believe his motivation had anything to do with the teachings of Islam. Just as Timothy J. McVeigh had nothing to do with Christianity, so does Nidal Malik Hasan have nothing to do with Islam.

Rather than pointing the finger at any religion for the actions of a disturbed individual, I prefer to take the moment and sincerely thank those heroes of Fort Hood who readily put their lives in harm's way so that I and my children can live in safety.

“Murder is Not What Jihad Is”

Originally published in *The Finger Lakes Times* (New York),
November 20, 2009

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

The Fort Hood shootings have sent shockwaves throughout the country. In a letter to *The Boston Globe*, I urged everyone to support the victims and their families and felt investigating other topics were inappropriate. Discussion has, however, begun over the motives of the culprit, Major Nidal Hassan. So it is with the aim of addressing questions others have raised, fully aware of the situation's seriousness, that I address allegations of Islam, in particular the philosophy of jihad, playing any role in this tragedy.

As I explained in a 9/19/08 editorial for the *Finger Lakes Times*, jihad must be understood from its source – how does the Qur'an define jihad and what was Prophet Muhammad's understanding of jihad? Jihad is derived from the root *juhd*, meaning to “strive to the utmost in a noble way.” Per the Qur'an's directives, jihad can be undertaken against oneself, society, or a visible enemy. The jihad against oneself and society is the process of continuously refining one's character and being a model for society to emulate. Socrates advocated a similar principle when he stated that an examined life is alone worth living.



The Qur'an declares, “whosoever killed a person — unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land — it shall be as if he had killed all mankind” (5:33)

Jihad can be waged against an enemy, but who is an enemy? Is every non-Muslim, every American soldier, or every American an enemy? No, nothing could be farther from the truth. In the previous article discussing jihad, I cited various Quranic verses and examples of Muhammad's conduct to prove that Islam in no way defines jihad as extremists do. An enemy against whom jihad can be waged is one who threatens society's religious freedom. Jihad against an enemy, as the Qur'an (22:40-42) and Muhammad defined it, is waged to establish religious freedom, not to harm innocent people. Far from being an agent of extremism jihad as Islam, not extremists, defines it cannot even be considered a dirty word.

That extremists could even think their warped worldview legitimate and thereafter threaten anyone who disagrees exposes their arrogance and complete disagreement with past prophets' examples. The Qur'an declares, “whosoever killed a person — unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land — it shall be as if he had killed all mankind” (5:33). Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the 4th Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, observed that thousands of years of religious history has established, “that the bearers of the divine

message are the oppressed, not the oppressors.”

During the Fort Hood memorial service, President Obama declared, “no faith justifies these murderous and craven acts ... the same extremists who killed nearly 3,000 Americans continue to endanger America, our allies, and innocent Afghans and Pakistanis.” This statement was meaningful to me. My grandfather, a history professor, was murdered, his chest found riddled with bullets, in 1974 simply because extremists considered his beliefs un-Islamic. In 1985, his brother, an eye surgeon who often performed procedures at low cost or free of charge, died from repeated stabs to the neck. Again, extremists considered his beliefs un-Islamic. I cite these examples so the reader doesn't feel as though I am urging understanding while I myself have not tasted the consequences of extremism.

So I urge the reader to examine this tragedy with a thoughtful eye. The Fort Hood tragedy coincided with Scott Roeder, who killed Dr. George Tiller in church, confessing he did so because Tiller was an abortion provider. This summer, Sgt. John M. Russell killed five comrades at a clinic on a U.S. base in Iraq. Their faith, or lack thereof, justified their heinous acts as much as Hassan's did his.

Don Richardson's Secrets of the Koran

By Lubna Malik

Islamophobia is irrational discrimination against Muslims based on a mistaken hatred or dread of Islam. It exists in Islamophobics seeking to exclude Muslims from economic, social, and public life. *Secrets of the Koran* is an account of Islam by an Islamophobic. The 252-page biased attempt by Mr. Don Richardson, a pastor, sarcastically, offensively, and prejudicially elucidates select verses of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muhammad.^{saw}

Ironically, the very hatred that Mr. Richardson alleges Islam endorses against all non-Muslims, is exactly what Mr. Richardson wholeheartedly promotes himself, against Muslims. In *Secrets of the Koran*, Mr. Richardson—without any training in the Arabic language or any non-Islamophobic understanding of Islam—teaches the reader the “true” message of Islam and the Holy Qur'an and sheds light on the “essence” of Prophet Muhammad's^{saw} teachings and practice. Some of the topics Mr. Richardson “expertly” addresses, which he himself admits are not corroborated by most of the world's eminent Islamic scholars—both Muslims and non-Muslims—and educational and intellectual periodicals, include Prophet Jesus^{as}, Muslim treatment of non-Muslims, warfare in the Holy Qur'an, polygamy, and Muslims in Western society and politics.

In an effort to seem unbiased, Mr. Richardson asserts to have cross-referenced seven different English translations of the Holy Qur'an. Interestingly, however, rather than also cross-referencing seven different commentaries or exegeses on the Holy Qur'an, Mr. Richardson offers his own “sound” inferences and explanations on countless verses. Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of Mr. Richardson's ignorance of Islam is on page 42, where he insists that Muslim men are not responsible for any kind of modesty, and only women must cover themselves from head to toe. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Richardson's “expertise” on Islam does not include the Qur'anic commandment and sayings of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} for believing men to lower their



gaze and dress modestly. Similarly, in discussing some of the war verses of the Holy Qur'an, Mr. Richardson separates verses 2:190-91 and 2:193 as if they exist independently, although any reader, when reading these verses as laid out in the Holy Qur'an, would very easily realize that the injunctions in 2:190-91, serve as preconditions to the commandment in 2:193. Clearly, Mr. Richardson is engaging in slanderous reconstruction. “Any time Mohammed wanted to add spice to his sex life, all he had to do was raid another town or caravan for female slaves, or buy some, and his God would approve,” (Richardson, 77). This sentence is probably most characteristic of Mr. Richardson's book. Mr. The book follows no clear structure or line of reasoning; it is more his personal frustrations with a faith he does not—nor strives to—understand. Upon a very elementary cross-reference of Mr. Richardson's quotations from some of the very translations he allegedly uses, his portrayed translations are de facto incorrect. Through the separation of verses, as stated above, and heavy usage of ellipsis, Mr. Richardson has reconstructed the message of several verses to fit his prejudicial hypotheses about Islam, that will assist him in his world domination of Christianity. It will be interesting to read an argument by argument reaction to Mr. Richardson's book. After reading this wholly biased analysis of Islam as nothing more than a war-mongering faith that endorses pedophiles and encourages polygamy, the real victims of this attack on the world's fastest growing religion are the neutral people—both Muslim and non-Muslim. After reading this “study” of Islam, the neutral Muslim is left with two possible feelings:

(i) this author hates Muslims and wants to eradicate this world of Muslims, so I am going to defend my faith, or (ii) this author hates Muslims and wants to eradicate this world of Muslims, so I am going to try even harder to blend in with this society so no one comes after me owing to the evil this author has alleged on my faith. Alas, it is no surprise that most people are not advocates and would probably choose the latter. In fact, the trend since the horrific events of 9/11 seem to accurately portray that many Muslims prefer to shrink into the shadows and hide their faith out of fear that the society around them will wrongfully judge their truly beautiful—and similar to Judeo-Christian—teachings. The non-Muslim, similarly has two options: (i) adhere to Mr. Richardson's allegations and initiate a crusade against Muslims, or (ii) study on their own and realize Mr. Richardson's book is full of inconsistencies. Which is easier? If true tolerance of religion is what Western society is based on—as Mr. Richardson claims it is—then Mr. Richardson's very own actions strive to eradicate toleration of any faith; (yes, Mr. Richardson lumps Hinduism and Buddhism as equally incompatible with Western ideals as Islam, and states that true salvation is through Jesus^{as}, thus putting Jews at a loss), except Christianity. And somehow Islam is the scary religion?

It truly is a travesty. When Timothy McVeigh blew up the Oklahoma City Building, no one said it was due to his being Christian. Even Mr. Richardson asserts that the Christian leadership that led the Crusades were not fighting because of religion, they just happened to be Christian. Yet, individuals who self-identify as Muslims *must* be fighting because Islam says so. Mr. Richardson may want to study the story of Prophet Jesus^{as} to hear just how his persecutors took his words out of context to accuse him of endorsing all kinds of heretical activities. Fanatical Muslims and politically-minded Muslims use the Holy Qur'an out of context to further their own agendas. Now, Mr. Richardson—self-assertingly seeing an opening for Christianity to eradicate Islam—is embracing Osama bin Laden's Islam and agreeing with him. It would be a pleasure to meet the many Muslim friends Mr. Richardson claims to have.

Muslim Sunrise 1954
Fourth Quarter

What is the Church's role in responsible society?

We consider that one of the superiority of Islam is that it is a complete and perfect law, including every phase of life—both worldly and spiritual. As the soul is irrefutably bound to the body during the life of this world, therefore any religious system to be entirely adequate to fulfill the many and diverse needs of man must contain within itself a complete code for matters, temporal and spiritual, individual and social, national and international. Here lies the beauty of Islam. It not only contains detailed rules, governing the actions of men in all these various fields of activity, but through the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad we are afforded an inspired example of the interpretation and enactment of these rules of conduct. From the Holy Quran and from the teachings of the Holy Prophet it is forcefully brought to us that the way to heaven is not found in the neglect of things worldly. Everything in the universe has its divinely allotted use. Nothing is to be gained by stressing one at the expense of another.

Now a Christian might very well reply to this that the Church has a very well planned



and administered program that extends into practically all the phases of man's various activities. Today this is no doubt true but what we would like to point out is that this is a relatively new trend in Christianity. Up until quite recent times the Christian church attempted to avoid becoming entangled in temporal affairs, in fact it even went so far as to forbid its clergymen and to discourage the laity from such action.

In an article entitled "Antidote to Communism" or "Churches Scan Africa Role" (August 19, 1954) *Christian Science Monitor* writes concerning the Second Assembly of

Therefore it is with great pleasure that we observe the awakening of the Christian church to its responsibilities in the field of social progress.

the World Council of Churches discussion of the Christian church's role in a responsible society:

"Probably the high light of this Assembly's message on these subjects, carefully formulated next week, will be its emphasis on specifics. Past church gatherings have laid the groundwork; 'Stockholm, 1925' broke three centuries of tradition for the main stream of churches to state formally that the church has a role in the world other than piety."

"Oxford, 1937", according to D.C.L. Patjin, director of International Organizations in the Netherlands Foreign Ministry, stated that in no uncertain terms that economic activities under judgment of Christ."

The *Monitor* goes on to say that the Christian church until well into the 20th Century has not only avoided such issues but all too often has allied itself with out-dated and corrupted systems along with which it has fought any tendency of progress that has shown itself in human society.

How different has been the case in Islam! From the very beginning the social side of man's life has been adequately looked after. Therefore it is with great pleasure that we observe the awakening of the Christian church to its responsibilities in the field of social progress. We only hope that it has not entered the field too late. The alarming rapidity with which the godless Communists were able to take over several Christian countries has been a point of concern for all men, who believe in God and the salvation of mankind.

AHADITH

Saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

(Translation from: Gardens of the Righteous)

“A man set out to visit a brother in another town. Allah appointed an angel to safeguard him on his way. When the man approached the angel he was asked: Whither are you bent? He answered: I intend to visit a brother of mine in yonder town. The angel asked: have you committed some valuables to him which you desire to take care of? The man answered: No. I have no desire except to visit him because I love him for the sake of Allah. The angel said to him: I am a messenger of Allah sent to tell you that Allah loves you as you love your brother for His sake.” (Muslim)

“The case of a righteous companion and that of an evil companion is like that of one who carries perfume and of one who blows into a furnace. The carrier of perfume might give you some as a gift, or you might buy it from him, or at least you might smell its fragrance. As for the other, he might set your clothes on fire, and at the very least you will breathe the foul air issuing from the furnace.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

“Be not envious of each other, do not make fictitious bids at an auction, bear no grudge, do not turn away from each other, do not make an offer during a pending transaction and become servants of Allah, brothers to each other. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he does not wrong him, or looks down upon him or humiliate him. Righteousness is a matter of the heart. Righteousness is a matter of the heart. Righteousness is a matter of the heart. It is enough evil for a person that he should look down upon his Muslim brother. Everything of a Muslim is forbidden to a Muslim; his blood, his property, his honor.” (Muslim)

Perspectives

The Mosque Culture



When I first departed for America in 1966, I was seen off by my entire family at the Pakistani airport. In those days there were about 15 relatives and friends for each departing passenger. I said my *good byes* to my mother and other relatives, but there was a bigger hurdle – my Dad.

When it came time to finally say good bye to my father, we said the usual formalities and words of *salaam*. I could see his eyes full of love, affection and prayers for me but I sensed an uneasiness about him, as if he was holding something back. Although I knew he was shy and reserved, I thought he might hug me. It didn't happen. Public displays of affection were a bit awkward for my Dad.

While I was walking up the stairs of the airplane, I looked back at him still standing in clear view. His eyes still fixed on me full of love, affection and prayers, holding back the pain of losing a son and the fear that the words he didn't say might always remain unsaid. I thought I would come back in two or three years and I would give him that hug, knowing full well that if I didn't initiate it, it wasn't going to happen.

As it turned out, I did return to Pakistan after about three years, but he wouldn't be there to receive me. He had passed away three months after I left him at the airport. That was my last memory of my father. I never got that hug.

That feeling of awkwardness is now one of regret. I wonder if he ever realized how much I appreciated him and the sacrifices he made for us – his family. The frustration and helplessness of not being able to hug him for the last time or hearing what was on his mind manages to squeeze tears from my eyes.

I arrived in Chicago and a few days later went to the local mosques for the first time. It was a strange experience for me. I was used to going to the mosque where everyone spoke the same language, was from the same area and was brought up in the same culture. The mosques here were different in many ways.

There were only about five Pakistanis and one member from India. The majority of the congregation were black. Yes, back then we referred to African Americans as blacks. There were blacks, whites and I guess we were somewhere in between, plus or minus. It was an era which proudly produced the *black is beautiful* slogan. They spoke English and obviously were from a different culture than the one I knew in Pakistan.

I saw faces of ladies at the mosque, whereas back in Pakistani mosques, women could not be seen. They used to be on the

other side of a wall. We knew they were there from the noise that came from that side but it was left to our imagination what they all looked like.

At this mosque, men were referred to as 'brothers' and all the ladies were 'sisters' even the Pakistani ones. I could even see the faces of Pakistani sisters.

Talking to the sisters was an awkward process. I was not accustomed to talking with women. I never knew what to say to them or what would get me in trouble. Like my father at the airport, I smiled, looked embarrassed and blushed but did not express myself. This embarrassment was multiplied by the handicap of speaking in a new language.

Talking to the African American brothers was also awkward because I couldn't speak English that fluently and I had to learn their unique accents and phrases. So most of the time we simply said *salaam* to each other and the usual *how are you* expressions and smiled. Then I would turn to the Pakistani members and talk in Urdu or Punjabi about what was happening. We discussed world problems and how the Pakistani government lacked the aptitude to solve its problems. Forty years later, we still discuss it. Obviously, the Pakistani government still hasn't listened to us and we're not wise enough to give up.

My lack of interaction with the African American Muslims was not the result of feeling superior to them. That never entered my mind.



My lack of interaction with the African American Muslims was not the result of feeling superior to them. That never entered my mind. Similarly, I never felt any inclination that they were in any way inferior to white people. My hesitation was because of the language and culture.

Similarly, I never felt any inclination that they were in any way inferior to white people. My hesitation was because of the language and culture. Among all my closest friends, I don't know of anyone who believes whites are superior to any other race. It's simply absurd thinking.

It is true that people in the sub-continent of India generally admire lighter complexion, but this is strictly a legacy from the British Empire. People tend to mimic those in power. Beauty is a physical manifestation of socially desired values. For example, those who have wealth in India and Pakistan tend to not have to work the fields, so their skin is lighter. There, lighter skin is considered a trait of beauty. On the contrary, those who have wealth in the West tend to have more time for leisure in the sun and enjoy getting tans. The West sees people with dark tans as a trait of beauty. However, those deeply rooted in Islam see righteousness as the socially desired value and therefore, cannot associate that with any physical attribute. Islamic beauty is seen as a spiritual light that emanates from a person, regardless of size, shape or color.

Our female Pakistani members also have cultural barriers communicating and socializing with the African American sisters. Many Pakistani ladies are not fluent in English because they choose not to work. When they see fellow Pakistani women they like to talk about clothes and jewelry. African American sisters don't wear the same clothes or the same jewelry. Shoes are probably the only common element but that simply can't sustain much of a conversation, although I'm sure some women will prove me wrong. Pakistani la-

dies are cordial and say *salaam* to the African American sisters but then move on to the comfortable arena in the mosque where they can speak in Urdu, Punjabi or Pashto.

Over the years, I have become close friends with many of the African American brothers. We can sit together without speaking a word and neither one would complain about one not saying something to the other. I have invited several to my home for dinner parties and have taken them to lunch or dinner at the restaurants as well. I have noticed, though, that in all these years none of them has ever invited me to their homes. I never took it serious enough that I would stop inviting them... but it got me to start thinking. It is like the hug I never got from my father. I don't profess to be a psychiatrist so I can't perform a self-diagnosis, but I would have been thrilled even if I was invited for hot dogs and coffee. Yes, I am one of the few Pakistanis who would boast of eating hot dogs and drinking black coffee. It is just the gesture of the invitation that would have been significant. I know it is not because they don't like me or have no affection for me, we are otherwise a family.

As is the case with most families, we complain. Our African American brothers complain about Pakistani brothers who speak in their own languages in the mosque and not English. Now that immigration has driven the number of Pakistani members to be much higher, isolation of English speakers is more visible. It is a cultural phenomenon.

After speaking the whole week in English at a job, you see your friends in the mosque and you want to converse and crack jokes in your native tongue. In Pakistan the Punjabi jokes are absolutely hilarious, but translating them into English is a sure way to kill the punch line, not to mention the

fact it'll confuse the heck out of your audience.

Islam is a multi-cultural religion. It has adopted and adjusted to many cultures in the world. A wedding ceremony of a Muslim family in the Middle East is altogether different than one in Pakistan, Indonesia or Nigeria. Islam will also accommodate the American culture as it has done with others. It will take time. Our next generation will see some changes but I speculate that the generation after them will see Islam adapting to the American culture in a dramatic way. African Americans will be comfortable as will Pakistanis.

In the physical world we see some substances that naturally do not interact with others. There are other substances called emulsifiers which enable the others to mix. Islam is the emulsifier for humanity. It allows interaction while preserving identity.

People who join Islam should not expect to change a whole culture. They should make an effort to interact and appreciate the members they share the mosque with. They need to live up to the religion they have accepted because there is much to learn. They would not be able to reach the spiritual heights if they get hung up on issues like someone else not saying *salaam* to them or talking to them in English. Initiate the hug instead of waiting for someone else to do so. Take it from me, you might be saving yourself from a lifetime of regret.

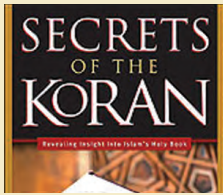
There is a lot to learn yet. The prayers in Arabic, understanding of the Holy Qur'an, wisdom from the *ah-hadith* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, the proper relationship with the *Khalifa* of the time and the Islamic upbringing of the children. Pakistanis are the ones who brought the treasure of Islam to African Americans. Now it is up to them to take it to the next level and possibly bring it to the Caucasians or Latino Americans. It is a way of life to be adopted and not just some Sufi rants and slogans.

I imagine some of my African American brothers who are close are going to try to invite me out after reading this perspective. If that's what you're thinking... forget it! It's already too late. But seriously, that isn't the point... besides, my wife wouldn't eat hot dogs or drink coffee. Basically put, we all have cultural differences in our homes. We just don't let that distract us from the lofty aspirations of Islam. It is for this reason that we are a family.

It sounds redundant but brothers and sisters are expected to be family. ♦

Falahud Din Shams

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الْحَمْدُ الْحَقِيقِيَّةُ
مِلَّةُ الْإِبْرَاهِيمَ
عَبْدُكَ يَا فَتِيحَ أَمْنٍ
الْصَّارِعُ الْمُسْتَقْبَلُ
الَّذِينَ نَفَعْتَهُمْ
الْمَغْرِبُ وَبَعْدَهُ



In the next issue (Spring 2010) of Muslim Sunrise, Inshallah, we will address every issue brought up by the writer in reference to the teachings of the Holy Quran.

- RATIONALE BEHIND THE NAMES OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN
- ISLAMIC INJUNCTION TO FOLLOW THE LAW OF THE LAND
- THE CONCEPT OF ABROGATION IN THE HOLY QUR'AN
- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUMA IN ISLAM
- TREATMENT OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS BY THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWS)
- FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND MALE CIRCUMCISION
- APOSTASY IN ISLAM
- COMPILATION OF THE HOLY QUR'AN INTO A TEXT
- TRUE SEERAT OF THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWS) IN MEDINA
- THE HOLY QUR'AN AS THE MIRACLE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWS)
- HOLY QUR'AN'S ACCOUNT OF ADAM AND EVE
- POLYGAMY AND CONCUBINES IN THE HOLY QUR'AN
- POLYGAMY AND CONCUBINES IN THE LIFE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWS)
- ISLAMIC PURDAH AS COMPARED TO MODEST INJUNCTIONS IN THE PRECEDING FAITHS
- BATTLE OF BADR
- CONTEXT AND IMPLICATION OF THE WAR VERSES IN THE HOLY QUR'AN
- ISLAM AND MADRASSAS
- HADHRAT AISHA (RA) AND HER MARRIAGE TO THE HOLY PROPHET (SAWS)
- OLD & NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES AS RELATED TO JESUS' ASCENSION
- DHIMMIS AND JIZYA
- ETYMOLOGY OF "ALLAH"



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